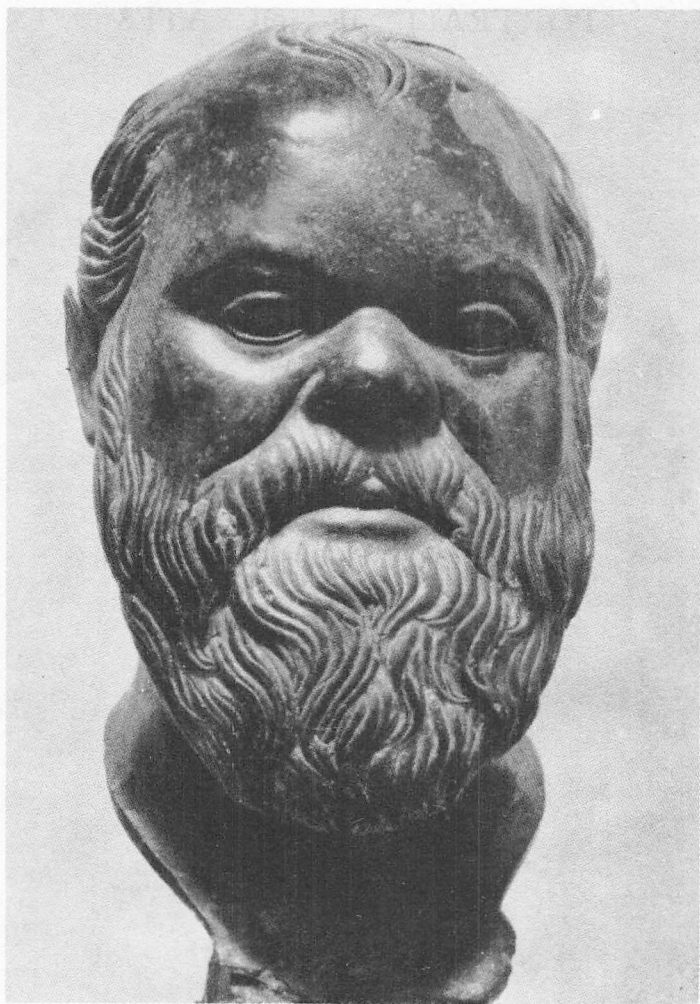


PORTRAIT OF SOCRATES



SOCRATES

The Munich head

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Plato
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PORTRAIT OF S O C R A T E S

BEING

THE *APOLOGY*, *CRITO*, AND *PHAEDO*
OF PLATO IN AN ENGLISH TRANSLA-
TION WITH INTRODUCTIONS AND
NOTES

BY

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OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

NEW YORK AND OXFORD

First published 1938
Printed in the United States of America

PREFACE

SOME books and some persons belong to the general inheritance of all educated men. It would be strange to know nothing of Shakespeare or of Napoleon; but it is quite as strange to know nothing of Socrates, for morally and intellectually he is one of the most remarkable figures in history, and he has had a deeper influence on western civilization than any one except Jesus Christ. The object of this book is to enable readers who know no Greek to study him in three works of Plato, each in itself a masterpiece, which give a picture of him that no other description can approach.

No one could read the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* without realizing that in them he is meeting a very great man. But he is meeting something more. From time to time, without realizing what it is doing, mankind makes a step forward and finds itself in a new world. I am not thinking of such discoveries as those of fire or the boat or printing or electricity or natural selection, important as they are, but of something more fundamental—a new outlook, a new attitude to life, in which possibilities of endless development are contained, a tiny seed which is the parent of a forest, a stone flung into the waters whose ripple is carried to their remotest shores. At the moment of their making the importance of such discoveries may not be realized and certainly their ultimate effects will be unguessed, but, once the step forward is taken, the world is changed for ever.

Such moments in history are the birth of Christ, and those centuries between 600 and 400 B.C. when

Greece brought forth the Spirit of Reason—the desire to see things as they are, or, as Socrates expressed it in words equally simple and profound, to follow the argument where it leads. The appearance of this spirit is one of the greatest events in history, and the world has never been the same since its epiphany. It seems at times (and the same is true of Christianity) that it has made little difference, that men have not even begun to learn its lesson, and that intolerance, prejudice, and unreason are still unchallenged. But it is not so. The leaven has been hid in the measure of meal and is working towards the leavening of the whole, though its action is slow, and though perhaps to the end there may be lumps of dough that it will never reach. Even to-day the achievements of reason are more impressive than its failures.

Reason was incarnate in Socrates and can be seen in him in its purest and simplest form. That is another ground why some acquaintance with him should be part of any liberal education. And here lies the excuse for this book. It is a tragedy that so many people, because they happen to know no Greek, never come in contact with the wisdom that Greek contains. Yet with the widening of the circle of education, there has grown up an immense number of Greekless readers who would enjoy and profit by reading some of the masterpieces of Greek in translation, but who never think of doing so, or, if they attempt it, find little guidance and help. I believe that an important duty of classical scholars is to provide such readers with *annotated* English editions of these Greek and Latin works which should be the

common property of educated people. It would be easy to draw up a list of them. A man has missed some of the greatest forces in European thought if he knows nothing of Plato's writings—above all the *Republic*, and the dialogues included in this book—the History of Thucydides, and the *Ethics* and *Politics* of Aristotle. It would of course be easy to add to this list, which only contains prose authors.

The present volume contains the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* in an English translation.¹ There exist already good translations of Plato, and there would be no justification for this book if a bare translation was sufficient for English readers. But it is not. Those who read Plato in English need notes at least as much as those who read him in Greek, if they are not to lose their way, fail to understand some of what they read, and miss the significance of much. I have therefore given a general introduction with an account of the life of Socrates and some comments on his importance to the modern world, headings to the chapters which show their content and bearing, and notes at the foot of the page which explain allusions, &c., though I have not attempted to save readers from using a Dictionary of Mythology, such as that in the Everyman Library or the *Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* by Sir Paul Harvey.

Writing for the ordinary educated person who wishes not to go through the world in ignorance of some of the greatest things in it, but who knows little or no Greek, I have avoided problems of scholar-

¹ The Trustees of the Jowett Copyright Fund have generously allowed me to use Jowett's translation, which, with a few alterations, forms the text of this book.

ship and concentrated on what makes these dialogues immortal. This also explains another feature of the edition. One of the dialogues in it—the *Phaedo*—contains stretches of argument, which is of much interest to specialists and philosophers, but has little value for a general reader and is not necessary to an appreciation of Socrates. These passages are printed in smaller type so that they can be either read or omitted.¹ This may shock purists; but it is not easy to see why ordinary people, who are interested in the importance of Socrates to the world, need struggle through pages of difficult argument on immortality, which would not convince any modern of its truth.

It is intended shortly to publish an edition of the *Poetics* of Aristotle, which will be uniform with the present volume and will be edited by Dr. W. H. Fyfe, Principal of Aberdeen University. If these volumes succeed sufficiently, the Publishers hope to produce other volumes on the same lines.

The best English editions of the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* (in Greek) are by J. Burnet (Clarendon Press): the editions (with French translation) by L. Robin in the Budé Series are excellent.² I am indebted to both, and also to A. E. Taylor's *Plato, the Man and his Work* (Methuen), which is indispensable for students of Plato. Simpler, but first-rate, are Lowes Dickinson, *Plato and his Dialogues* (Allen & Unwin), and A. E. Taylor, *Platonism*

¹ A short passage in the *Apology* has been treated in the same way.

² Archer Hind's edition of the *Phaedo* is alluded to in this volume as A.H., Burnet's as B.

(Harrap). *The Claim of Antiquity* (Oxford University Press) gives a list of translations and books on Plato for the general reader.

Those who know nothing of Greek are recommended to read some brief history of Greece such as those by C. E. Robinson (Methuen), C. A. Fyffe (Macmillan's History Primers), or M. A. Hamilton (Oxford University Press). H. W. Household's *Hellas the Forerunner* (Dent, 2 vols.) and H. R. James's *Our Hellenic Heritage* (Macmillan, 2 vols.) are also excellent introductions.

I cannot conclude this Preface without recording my obligation to the lynx eye of the Clarendon Press reader.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SOCRATES. The Munich head . . . *Frontispiece*

INTRODUCTION

1.	Political background to the life of Socrates . . .	xi
2.	Intellectual unrest: the Sophists . . .	xiii
3.	Life of Socrates: his methods . . .	xv
4.	His trial . . .	xxi
5.	The charges of irreligion and of 'corrupting the young'; reasons for his condemnation . . .	xxiv
6.	His importance as a thinker:	
	(a) Contribution to the technique of thought; insistence on clear thought . . .	xxix
	(b) Method of dealing with an age of intellectual unsettlement. He represents the scientific habit of mind . . .	xxxiv
	(c) The uses of his method to us . . .	xl
7.	His importance as a man; characteristics; his mission and its significance; his martyrdom . . .	xli
8.	Sources of our knowledge of Socrates . . .	xlvii
9.	The Dialogue form . . .	l
10.	Some Greek words: 'philosophy'; 'justice'; 'beauty'; 'soul'; 'temperance' . . .	li

APOLOGY: Introduction, p. 1; Text, p. 3

CRITO: Introduction, p. 49; Text, p. 50

PHAEDO: Introduction, p. 73; Theory of 'Ideas', p. 78;
Orphism, p. 82; Text, p. 84

INTRODUCTION

ABOUT the year 470 B.C. there was born in Athens the son of a working sculptor and a midwife: Socrates, of whom the English philosopher John Stuart Mill has said that the world cannot too often remember that he has existed. The man about whom these words were spoken was executed by his countrymen on charges of irreligion and of corrupting the young. Who was he? What was his life? Why was he put to death? Why cannot he be too often remembered?

A modern traveller in Greece sees the mountains, plains, and seas which Socrates knew, the Acropolis and temples where he worshipped, the Pnyx or Place of Assembly which is associated with one famous scene in his life; but to realize Greece as it was in the fifth century B.C. we must imagine a country split up into a number of small independent states, few of them as large as an English county, each with its own government, law-courts, army, and (if on the sea-coast) its own navy, each jealous of its independence and only co-operating with its neighbours under the threat of external danger. Among these small states three were pre-eminent: Corinth, famous for its commerce; Sparta, the ancient Prussia but much more Prussian, a rigid military state ruled by a small oligarchical caste, where all interests were excluded except those that bred healthy human beings and good soldiers; Athens, with an area of about 700 square miles and a population in the time of Socrates of some 350,000, of whom perhaps 40,000 were adult male citizens, the first democracy in history,

governing an empire, trading all over the Mediterranean, and producing at the same time masterpieces of art, poetry, and thought. Socrates lived in the greatest and most exciting period of his country's history, when Athens developed from a mere city-state to be the head of an empire, and from a moderate to an unrestricted democracy, which proved unequal to its task.

In the political drama of that century there are three Acts. The first, concluded before the birth of Socrates but still vivid in men's minds, was the Persian attempt to make Greece a province of an Oriental monarchy, which the Greek states, or the majority of them, had successfully united to repel. The second Act was the rise of Athens to the moral and intellectual leadership of Greece, the formation of an Athenian Empire, and the creation of a body of poetry, architecture, and sculpture unsurpassed before or after in human history. The third Act was a coalition of rival Greek states which were jealous of Athenian power, and the so-called Peloponnesian War beginning in 431 and ending in 404 with the overthrow of Athens; Sparta, Corinth, Thebes, and the rest uniting to destroy a neighbour whose domination they feared. Such was the external history of Athens in the fifth century—a great victory, a great political and spiritual expansion, a long war, and a disastrous defeat. Home politics were not less momentous and exciting. In his lifetime Socrates saw a democracy develop with the motto: 'Our constitution is named a democracy because it is in the hands not of the few but of the many. But our laws secure equal justice for all in their private disputes, and our

public opinion welcomes and honours talent in every branch of achievement, on grounds of excellence alone.¹ But the military disasters of the Peloponnesian War led to constitutional change, and within the ten years between 413 and 404 there followed in quick succession a moderate oligarchy, a limited democracy (the best government, Aristotle thought, which Athens ever enjoyed), again an unrestricted democracy, and finally at the end of the war the rule of the 'Thirty Tyrants',² eight months of ruthless despotism, confiscations, and lawless executions of the Soviet type. Then gradually a democracy re-established itself which lasted for nearly eighty years. Under this régime and by one of its leaders Socrates was prosecuted and put to death. Such, telescoped into a few phrases, was the history of Athens in his lifetime; but it will mean nothing to us unless we realize in imagination something of the ardours, agonies, and intense stresses which these brief years comprised. Our era is one of unexampled rapidity of change: but even the last seventy years have not been more crowded and swift in revolution than the age of Socrates.

The revolution and unrest were not in politics alone. It was an epoch of intellectual confusion, when orthodox religion and traditional morals, which at its opening were less questioned than in England a hundred years ago, were before its close shaken by destructive criticism. How modern, how revolu-

¹ Thucydides ii. 37.

² 'Tyrant' is a misleading translation of the Greek word *τύραννος* which originally simply meant absolute monarch (it is used both of Zeus and of ordinary kings). Even later it rarely, if ever, bears as sinister a sense as the English word. 'Dictator' is a nearer equivalent.

tionary the critics were, can be seen if we compare the crude polytheism of Homer and Hesiod or even of Pindar (b. 522 B.C.) with such phrases as 'About the gods I cannot know that they exist or that they do not exist or what is their nature'; 'Man is the measure of all things' (Protagoras, d. 411); 'Nothing is certain except that birth leads to death and that life cannot escape ruin' (Critias, d. 403); 'Did justice ever deter any one from taking by force whatever he could? Men who indulge the natural ambition of empire deserve credit if they are in any degree more careful of justice than their position demands' (Thucydides). The only analogy in history to the intellectual chaos of the fifth century B.C. is the intellectual chaos of our own. Those years saw what we have seen, a radical revision of accepted views on religion, conduct, and politics, and in Athens as with us the disturbing agent was a rationalism which began by creating natural science and, having supplanted a theological account of the universe by a physical explanation, turned to religion and morals and there, too, criticized current beliefs. In these latter fields the new views were spread by men who often appear in Plato's dialogues and with whom the ordinary Athenian classed Socrates—the so-called sophists. The name means 'wise men' and was given to contemporary thinkers (the H. G. Wells, Julian Huxleys, Gerald Heard, &c., of the day; among them were some great men), who, having neither printed book nor wireless to expound their views, travelled from city to city, lecturing, talking, collecting pupils. Plato disliked them because he thought their methods superficial,¹

¹ 'Most of our literary men belong to the class and certainly our

and the advanced views which many of them held made them unpopular with the conservative and orthodox, but they were successful and influential. A democracy will always demand higher education, if for no other reason, because without it political success is impossible. There was no organized higher education in fifth-century Athens, and men flocked to the sophists, who offered to teach the art of politics. Now politics (above all in a Greek state) are almost coextensive with human life, and therefore the sophist discussed every kind of moral and political problem. The result was great intellectual stimulus. But the sophists were unable to lay the spirits which they called up, and it is true of them, as perhaps of their modern counterparts, that 'though they stimulated intellectual hunger in wide circles, in the end they only contributed to the general inner insecurity and unrest of the age'.¹

Till its close the life of Socrates was ordinary enough. There is no trace of his following his father's trade—small private means and willingness to be very poor² enabled him to lead a thinker's life.

popularisers of science and of ethical and political ideas. On the other hand our specialists in science have towards the popularisers the same kind of attitude that Socrates had towards the Greek sophists.' Lowes Dickinson, *Plato and his Dialogues*, p. 35.

¹ Jaeger, *Humanistische Reden u. Vorträge*, p. 157.

² Speaking to a friend he said: 'If I could find a good purchaser, I think I could get for all my property including my house quite easily five minae' (about £20: for an equivalent modern money value, multiply 6 times). Xen. *Oecon.* ii. 3. A comic poet wrote: 'I hate Socrates who has thought everything out but ignored the problem how to provide himself with food' (Eupolis, fr. 372). In earlier life he was better off, but the war impoverished him.

He married in late life—at the time of his death his eldest son was a youth and the third an infant in arms. His wife Xanthippe, who was possibly of better family than his own, has become a byword for shrewishness, but there is nothing in these dialogues to suggest that she was anything worse than a woman with little control over her emotions and no power of entering into her husband's mind. This explains, perhaps, why his children were very ordinary, and why it has been said that he had no home life—the cause possibly in him, as in other Greek writers, of something wanting in a character otherwise so rich. We have no details of Socrates' early life. At the age of 47 he was sufficiently well known to be the central figure in an extant comedy of Aristophanes called *The Clouds*, where he is caricatured as a worshipper of the Clouds, the Air, and other strange deities appropriate to a scientist, and as the master of a Thinking-shop where his pupils study problems of Physics, Biology, and other sciences, and learn the art of making the worse argument appear the better. But we have vivid glimpses of him in situations unconnected with philosophy—at a siege, in a routed army, at a dinner-party, and twice in politics, taking with courage and calmness the unpopular side, and disregarding in the first case the angry demands of the democratic Assembly, and in the second the order of the all-powerful 'Thirty Tyrants'.

But though such instances show that he could play a part in public with decision and effect, Socrates avoided politics so far as this was possible in a state that exacted political and military service from all its members, and his interests and life were those of a

thinker. His early studies had been in natural science—physics, astronomy, geography—but for reasons given in the *Phaedo* he deserted these for human problems, of the right life for man and how best to live it, and directed his thought to the most practical and pressing of all questions, that of human conduct; on the study of this he spent his time and his amazing energy. Yet he is not our idea of an intellectual. Some of his contemporaries had libraries—that of Euripides was famous—his greatest successors, Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, the Stoics, had schools where they and other scholars studied philosophy or science. Socrates had neither library nor school, and the place to find him was in the market or a gymnasium or a friend's house—the greatest of the Platonic Dialogues opens as he is walking back from a festival at the port of Athens—where he might be found talking sometimes to contemporary philosophers, but quite as probably to a politician, a business man, or an artisan. In this country he would have been thoroughly at home in a country public house or in Hyde Park—if he could have persuaded the orators to descend from their soap-boxes and answer questions. He was in continual touch with the ordinary man and the interests of the ordinary man; that distinguishes him from many great thinkers (including his pupil, Plato). He had, indeed, an intimate circle of 'companions' or 'disciples', men of all ages and from all parts of the Greek world—we meet some of them in the *Phaedo* and can form from that dialogue an idea of their discussions. But we find all sorts of people in his company, as was easy in that small city where men of every type met each

other in a way impossible in our large and crowded capitals. It is difficult to appreciate the atmosphere of the city-state, but unless we do so we shall not understand the life of Socrates. Every one in Athens knew every one else; every one knew what was going on, for not only did political, social, and literary news spread much more quickly than in a big country, but it was much more interesting, since every one was acquainted with the people concerned. Life had a directness, a personal interest, and went with a vigour and intensity unknown in the somewhat torpid circulation of our huge communities—England or France or America, or even London or Paris or New York—which are like vast animals, weighty and powerful, but slow to move. Inhabitants of Dublin or Belfast live in somewhat similar conditions and know at first hand what a city-state is.

The smallness of Athens and the open-air life made easy these endless discussions which Socrates enjoyed. Nor was it mere enjoyment. For him (and here we can learn from him) discussion was the way to knowledge. It is an unfamiliar road to us who pursue it through books and lectures, both of which Socrates held in low esteem. He wrote nothing himself, he mistrusted books because they can neither ask nor answer questions and are apt to be swallowed whole, and he said of their readers that they hear much and learn nothing, appear full of knowledge, but for the most part are without it, and have the show of wisdom without its reality.¹ He disliked lectures equally and for the same reason, and said of orators: 'If any one asks them a question, they are as

¹ *Phaedrus* 275.

incapable as a book of answering it or themselves putting a question. If any of their statements are challenged they behave like a brass pot which gives out a continuous ringing sound, if you strike it, till some one puts his hand on it; so the orators, at the least query, go off into a long-drawn speech.¹ The true approach to knowledge was not through books or lectures, but through conversation, discussion, question and answer, two or more persons beating a subject up and down, till the chaff is winnowed from the wheat,

And what hath mass and matter, by itself
Lies rich in virtue and unmingled.

Hence these endless conversations in the market-place and elsewhere, by which opinions were tested, fallacies detected, and the truth revealed. In part his method resulted from his view of knowledge. To Socrates it was not an article handed out by those who possessed it to those who do not, but something which men have inside them already. Only, few of them are able unaided to bring it to birth; they need, as he put it, a midwife to help them, the instruments used are question and answer, and his own function was to 'attend the souls of men when they are in labour' and help them to bring forth something which is not 'a phantom or a lie but genuine and true'.² It is a surprising doctrine, and somewhat dangerous, for it underestimates the necessity for brute knowledge of facts—doubtless because that age did not possess our accumulations of them. To do it justice, we must remember both that it is a paradox and that

¹ *Protagoras* 329.

² *Theaetetus* 150.

Socrates is speaking of the philosophical, political, and moral subjects in which he was interested. But in the paradox is concealed a truth which is continually forgotten—that the fundamental thing in education is the activity of the learner's mind, and that nothing is learnt which does not become part of his own experience. A hard saying for an age of examinations, of newspapers and cheap books, of ready-made ideas and encyclopaedic information! Yet its truth is becoming clearer to us. When the University Grants Committee urges that more time should be given in universities to discussion groups, tutorials, and seminars, they are demanding the substitution of the Socratic method for the lecture; when a W.E.A. Tutorial Class devotes half of its time to discussion it is following Socrates; and in those tutorial hours, which are among the few features of the older universities that have no critics, the good tutor is the midwife of whom Socrates speaks.

The method of Socrates then was talk, question and answer; and, here again differing from our conception of a philosopher, he talked not only with ordinary people but also on ordinary subjects. These are some of the topics which he discussed—how to make friends, how to treat children, how to support female relations in bad times, how to manage a cavalry regiment, how to revive the greatness of his country, the evidence for the existence of God, what knowledge is, whether goodness can be taught. 'He was always discussing human life',¹ says one of his friends in words which reveal not only the interests

¹ *Xen. Mem.* i. i. 16.

of Socrates but something of fifth-century Athens—‘considering the meaning of religion and irreligion, beauty and ugliness, justice and injustice, reason and unreason, courage and cowardice, the character of the state and the citizen, government and the capacity for it, and those other subjects, knowledge of which marked the true man, while ignorance of them was really servile.’ Sometimes he took a phrase like ‘justice’ or ‘courage’ or ‘self-control’—as one might take ‘education’, ‘democracy’, ‘liberty’, ‘nationalism’, or any current catchword—examining, analysing, sifting, questioning to see what men really meant by it and whether their opinions held water. In this struggle to dissipate vague and foggy thought, to clear the mind, to penetrate to first principles and rule thought and conduct by them, Socrates spent his life. He was 70 when he was brought before an Athenian jury on the charge of irreligion and of having a bad influence on the young. The actual words of the indictment were: ‘Meletus, son of Meletus, a member of the tribe of Pitthus, against Socrates, son of Sophroniscus, of the tribe of Alopeké. Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods in whom the State believes, and of introducing other strange divinities; and he is also guilty of corrupting the young. Penalty death.’

The trial was unlike anything to which we are accustomed. We must imagine a jury of probably 500—the size of juries varied with the importance of the case—an audience difficult to address, turbulent, impatient, ready to express angry dissent. The Archon, or presiding officer, had no power to sum up or direct the jury, and in effect the verdict in an Athenian trial

was given by a mass meeting whose ears were full of the biased statements of the litigants and their passionate appeals, and who had never heard the evidence or the arguments impartially reviewed. Such was the court before which Socrates was tried. The prosecutors were three, a curious trio: Meletus, who took the leading part, a young man and minor poet who wrote tragedies and whom alone of the accusers we can visualize—he had a hooked nose, long hair, and a scanty beard;¹ Lycon, an orator of the day; and Anytus, one of the chief democratic leaders, an upright, courageous, capable statesman who had deserved well of his country. He had been annoyed by Socrates' suggestion that he should bring his son up to some better occupation than his own trade of tanning—it is an interesting light on the type and outlook of a leader of the Athenian democracy—and when the young man later became a hopeless drunkard he must have felt his views about the pernicious influence of the philosopher confirmed. But it was not the personal grievance which caused him to attack Socrates. These were the three prosecutors whom we should have seen in that Athenian court. On the other side was the defendant, a man of 70 with an ugly face, flattened nose, and prominent eyes. Both sides pleaded in person, for no Athenian could be represented by counsel, though his speech might be composed for him by a professional speech-writer. We have two versions of the defence of Socrates, the so-called *Apology* which is printed in this volume and a speech with the same title published by Xenophon; the speeches of the accusers have not been

¹ *Euthyphro* 2.

preserved. The jury brought in a verdict of Guilty by a majority of 60. Then followed under Athenian law a curious proceeding. The prosecutor proposed a penalty, but the defendant had the right to make a counter-proposal. It was a device characteristic of Greek ingenuity and sensible enough, for a normal defendant was likely in his own interests to propose something which the jury would accept. If Socrates had chosen to propose exile as a penalty, there is no doubt that it would have been accepted, but he took a different course, and proposed that he should be given the right, possessed by certain benefactors and specially honoured citizens of the State, to dine in the City Hall at the public expense—a modern analogy would be a Civil List Pension. Even after this suggestion, which the jury must have regarded as flip-pant impertinence, there was only a majority of 110 votes in favour of the death penalty.

The story is full of puzzles. What do the prosecution and the condemnation mean? Was Socrates guilty on one or on both counts? If so, why was he not prosecuted for these offences before? He had been talking to 'the youth' for many years, and nearly a quarter of a century earlier Aristophanes had given a list of the 'strange divinities' whom he was supposed to worship. Why was the prosecution brought at that particular moment, when the years of war and civil strife were over and a liberal régime had been established? The Thirty Tyrants had been driven out and replaced by a democracy which in spite of disaster abroad and bitter memories at home had abstained from reprisals and revenge, amnestied opponents, refrained even from demanding back

property confiscated under the past régime, and left posterity a rare example of how to conduct a revolution. (Those who are fond of condemning the Athenians for fickleness and passion should note their behaviour in 403 B.C.) Yet it was under this democracy and by Anytus, one of its most generous and disinterested leaders, that Socrates was prosecuted. Why did the Athenians put to death the man of whom Plato writes that 'he was the wisest, best, and most just man that I have ever known', or why did they wait so many years to do it?

Clearly on the religious charge the accusers had a strong formal case. The word 'religion' is used of three different attitudes: orthodoxy, or acceptance of received creed and dogma; the observance of rites and ceremonies; and a spiritual view of the universe and of life, based on the recognition of a higher power to which men owe reverence and duty. In the two latter senses of the word Socrates was religious: no reader of these dialogues can doubt his profound belief in God and in the moral order. But the charge was not of irreligion, but of unorthodoxy, of 'not believing in the national gods and of introducing strange divinities'. Socrates might indeed reply that he paid due observance to the State religion and that his mission to Athens was prompted by the words of the Delphic oracle. 'He was frequently seen', says Xenophon, 'sacrificing at home and on the public altars of the city.'¹ Yet it is clear that if he prayed to Zeus or Apollo, these deities for him were not the figures of the Olympian Pantheon which the man in

¹ Xen. *Mem.* I. i. 2. See also p. 198.

the street worshipped, any more than the God of Faust is the God of Gretchen. And how could a man deny the charge of 'introducing new deities' who professed that his actions were governed by an inward voice which from earliest years had visited him and which he called τὸ δαίμόνιον, the very word which appears in the indictment!¹ It would have been very difficult to answer this part of the charge convincingly, and the *Apology* touches but never faces it.²

But it was not the unorthodoxy of Socrates that was in the mind of an honest patriot like Anytus when he pressed the indictment or of the ordinary Athenian juror who voted for the death-sentence. It was the charge of 'corrupting the young'. To understand this, we must recall two memories fresh in the minds of every one in that court. Five years earlier their country, after twenty-seven years of war, had been starved into submission, their city walls razed, their fleet destroyed, their empire dissolved, in one of the annihilating defeats of history. That was one burning memory. With it went another, the rule of the Thirty Tyrants. The anti-democratic party had used the defeat of Athens to seize power and, with the help of Sparta, had held down the city, executing their enemies in Athens, confiscating their property, silencing opposition and free speech with ruthless cruelty. That was over now, but only four years ago: the democracy had been re-established, but men's nerves were still on edge. To us this seems to have nothing to do with the harmless occupations of Socrates, who himself had come into conflict with the Thirty. But to an Athenian it might seem otherwise.

¹ *Apology*, p. 29.

² p. 14 f.

No individual had been more responsible for the defeat of Athens than Alcibiades, who had persuaded his country to undertake the disastrous Sicilian expedition, and then betrayed her plans to Sparta and shown how she could best be injured; and Alcibiades had been an intimate of Socrates. Further, Socrates' criticisms of the Athenian democracy were well known, and among his associates had been not only many of the anti-democratic party but two of the Thirty Tyrants themselves, Charmides and their leader Critias, a brilliant intellectual, poet, dramatist, political philosopher, but also, Xenophon says, 'the most deceitful, violent and bloody' of them. All three were enemies of democracy—Alcibiades had called it 'an admitted folly', Critias and Charmides had tried to drown it in blood. Two were notoriously irreligious—Alcibiades and his friends had parodied the Mysteries of Eleusis and were suspected of mutilating the statues of Hermes (an analogy in a Roman Catholic country would be a mock celebration of the Mass and the destruction of crucifixes), while Critias had explained religion by saying that clever conservatives had invented the gods in order to buttress up morality. In that age 'among those who did the state signal service there were none who had sat at the feet of Socrates'.¹ In view of these facts the charges of 'introducing new divinities' and 'corrupting the youth' take on a new light. It is not surprising that the anger felt against the pupils should be transferred to their supposed master, the man whom popular opinion regarded as a centre of radical and disturbing thought.

¹ Gomperz, *Greek Philosophy*, ii. 114.

In the *Apology* Socrates replies to the charge of 'corrupting the young' that he had no 'doctrine', and that Meletus had produced no evidence either from his pupils or from their relations (though many were in the court), who would certainly have testified if they or their family had suffered from his influence. The answer is a fair one, but not complete. Was it the best thing for Athens that during all these years of foreign war and domestic tension Socrates should have spent day after day, not in a study but in public discussion, probing in his negative way the accepted principles of morals and showing their inadequacy? That question Socrates never answers. Something will be said about it later. Meanwhile we may realize that the enemies of Socrates had a case. To us he appears as a saint of rationalism, one of the great creative figures and benefactors of humanity. His contemporaries saw him in a different light. He himself describes how he spent his time in explaining to his fellow citizens that 'they thought themselves wise but were not really wise'.¹ In all ages this is bound to be an unpopular occupation: 'Whoso shall follow truth too near the heels, it may haply strike out his teeth.' Nor could it have been made more popular by Socrates' favourite mannerism, the so-called 'irony' which in his lifetime and after was associated with his name, a habit of understatement, a tendency to affect ignorance, which sprang partly from genuine humility, partly from the educated man's dislike of over-emphasis or exaggeration, but partly perhaps from the disputant's wish to draw on a stupid, vehement, or dishonest opponent to commit and

¹ p. 11 f.

expose himself.¹ All this must have made him disliked. But there were graver counts against him. To his opponents he was a man who tilted at accepted beliefs, raised novel and perplexing questions, forced his doubts and doctrines on any one whom he could get to listen, and pretended to special and spurious intimations from God. 'The future of democracy', we may suppose Anytus to have felt, 'is still in the balance. We know its open enemies, but behind them is the unseen influence by which their heresy is bred and fostered, this old man who for thirty years and more has been an intellectual poison in Athens, always criticizing our moral and religious ideals, but putting nothing in their place, upsetting the minds of the young. Not that we want to kill him; let him go into exile or stay here and hold his tongue; but we have paid too dearly already for his influence, and it must stop.' That, or something like it, is the case against Socrates, as Anytus and his supporters saw it, the meaning behind the words of the indictment. Socrates was the victim of a political neurosis and an excusable misunderstanding.

In the last few years we have seen a political

¹ Among English writers Addison is full of irony; a good example is *Tatler* 153 ('The Poetaster'). Benjamin Franklin's *Autobiography* shows how the method can be abused: 'Soon after I procur'd Xenophon's Memorable Things of Socrates . . . I was charm'd with it, adopted it, dropt my abrupt contradiction and positive argumentation, and put on the humble inquirer and doubter. . . . I found this method safest for myself and very embarrassing to those against whom I used it; therefore I practis'd it continually, and grew very artful and expert in drawing people, even of superior knowledge, into concessions, the consequences of which they did not foresee, entangling them in difficulties out of which they could not extricate themselves, and so obtaining victories that neither myself nor my cause always deserved' (p. 22). Doubtless Socrates' enemies thought that he employed 'irony' in this way.

neurosis which has some analogy with this and a misunderstanding which is less easy to excuse. In Athens a long war and a disastrous defeat were followed by political revolution, oligarchs (we might call them Fascists) overthrowing the democracy and being in turn overthrown by it. In Germany a long war and a disastrous defeat were also followed by a new political order, which in its turn was overthrown. In both countries an intellectual scapegoat for national defeat and political revolution was sought and sacrificed; in Athens the scapegoat was the supposed master of Alcibiades and Critias, in Germany it was the Jews, the Socialists, and the Liberals. The analogy is not exact at every point, and among the differences are these—the Athenians were content with one victim, and nearly half of the jury voted for his acquittal.

What can we learn from Socrates? What is the secret of his greatness? There are two types among those who have forwarded the advance of mankind. Some make a contribution which passes into the general stock, and, absorbed and blended with it, almost loses any individual character and is handed on as part of the common inheritance of the race. Such are Galileo, Newton, Darwin, men whose thought or discoveries have made the world different, yet whom few but specialists trouble to read. But there is another type to which Socrates belongs—chiefly creative artists and religious or spiritual leaders—who may have made a great contribution to the river of human progress, swelled its stream, or altered its direction, but whose most potent influence is individual and personal, who must be met in their

works or writings if we are to understand their power, and who, so met, illuminate and inspire almost as if we had known them in life. The books or creations of these men 'do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are; nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them'. Those words of Milton are true of the three dialogues in this book.

Yet so far we have seen nothing in Socrates to explain Mill's saying that the world cannot too often remember him. He did indeed make a contribution to the technique of thought which all of us use and which Aristotle describes as the discovery of 'inductive reasoning and of general definitions'.¹ By this Aristotle means that Socrates was the first man who systematically tried to get behind *particular examples* of (e.g.) justice or goodness or education to a *general definition* of what justice or goodness or education is. He did it inductively, by taking instances of (e.g.) just or good actions or of education and trying to ascertain the element that was common to all the instances in each case. This forms the basis of all his discussions. He begins by searching for a general principle, takes it as a hypothesis, then sees whether it fits the facts or not, and retains or rejects it accordingly. Thus, when justice is the subject of discussion, he tests in succession the following definitions: that it consists in (*a*) restoring to everybody what is due to him; or (*b*) doing good to our friends and harm to our enemies; or (*c*) that it is the interest

¹ *Metaphysics* 1078 b 27. 'Induction' is, of course, here used in a limited sense.

of the stronger; and rejects all of them, because they do not fit the facts. It is a method which may often lead to no definite conclusions, but at least it avoids those discussions which drift up and down like unanchored yachts, because neither of the disputants have general principles in common, and possibly not even a general principle at all in view. Socrates anchors himself to a general principle before he argues, though he is always ready to raise his anchor, if the holding proves bad. Xenophon thus describes his method and its results: 'When the discussion was brought back to fundamental principles, the truth became clear even to his opponents: and when he himself was expounding a subject, he proceeded on generally acknowledged propositions, regarding this as the sure method in argument. That was why, of all men I have known, he was far the most successful in bringing his hearers to agree with him.'¹

But we do not read Socrates for his method in argument, though it is the only satisfactory method, nor, though it made an epoch in the history of thought, for his discovery of 'inductive reasoning and general definitions'. Nor do we study him for the problems which he discusses, though these are important. The *Crito* raises the question how far the citizen must obey the state, the *Phaedo* discusses immortality. But, interesting as these subjects are, there are certainly better discussions of them elsewhere, and the claim of Socrates on our attention, and the lessons he can teach, do not lie here. Nor on the surface is there anything inspiring in his life's work. He went through Athens examining people's

¹ *Mem.* iv. vi. 14 f.

opinions and convictions, tapping them with the hammer of criticism to see if they were sound, consistent with themselves, consonant with reason. Here is a typical example. A young Thessalian, Meno, who later lost his life in the campaign of the Ten Thousand in Persia, raised with Socrates the problem much discussed at the time: Can goodness¹ be taught or must it be acquired by practice? 'What *is* goodness?' asked Socrates. Unprepared for this question, Meno replied that men and women, young and old, had a different kind of goodness. 'But what is the common element in these different kinds?' Meno hazarded the answer that it was the capacity to command. 'But if the commands given are bad, is it still goodness?' 'Then,' replied Meno, 'goodness is courage, justice, wisdom, magnanimity.' 'No,' said Socrates, 'you are giving a list of virtues, not telling me what goodness is.'² At this point Meno collapses. 'Before I knew you,' he says, 'I was told that you did nothing but perplex yourself and make others perplexed. You are (if I may speak jocularly) the very image in looks and otherwise of the flat torpedo-fish which paralyses any one who comes near it and touches it. That, I think, is what you have done to me. My mind and my tongue are paralysed and I don't know what answer to give you.' Poor Meno! He is a serious, intelligent young man, honestly interested in vital problems. We sympathize with him and feel that Socrates' treatment of him is tactless, rather cruel, and quite unprofitable.

¹ For the meaning of 'goodness' or 'virtue' (*areté*) see p. 7.

² This is an example of the use of 'general definitions and inductive reasoning' of which Aristotle speaks.

We sympathize because Meno is the prototype of ourselves. He embarks on an argument about 'goodness' without any clear idea of the meaning of the word. How many of us use such words as 'liberal' or 'democratic' or 'spiritual' or 'religious' or 'civilized', and, if some one suddenly asked what exactly we meant by them, would feel as if a 'torpedo-fish' had touched us! When asked to define goodness, Meno can only give examples of it. We are all familiar with persons who, when (e.g.) honesty is being discussed, say such things as 'Mr. Baldwin is my idea of an honest man', or 'It is honest to sell goods at a fair price', or 'It is not honest for a salesman to take commissions'; or who, when education is discussed, speak as if it consisted in attending school and university—or even particular schools and universities. Meno had, as he says with charming candour (and the words betray him), 'made an infinite variety of speeches about goodness in the past—and excellent speeches they were, I thought—but now I cannot even say what goodness is'.¹ Such speeches can be heard in many conversations and read in many leading articles. Most of us make an 'infinite variety' of them on 'goodness' and on other subjects and 'think them excellent'. For we are like Meno in every way but one; there is rarely a Socrates to 'paralyse' us with these direct, painful questions about the meaning of the terms we use.

But this perpetual criticism is the very thing which many people dislike in Socrates. It seems tiresome, rather cruel, even harmful. A man whose convictions were unsound saw them broken to pieces before

¹ *Meno* 80.

his eyes, and did not necessarily get anything to replace them. For Socrates was as severe a critic of his own opinions as of other people's, and even if he advanced a theory of his own would probably throw that too into the melting-pot. Something of his method can be seen in the discussions of immortality in the *Phaedo*,¹ and there are dialogues in which he upsets first current views, then the substitutes for them which he has himself put forward. It is intelligible not only that the average man disliked the inquisitions of Socrates, but that Anytus and others, though they might have tolerated him in normal times, thought him a grave danger to a state shaken by war and revolution and by the moral unrest and instability which these bring. That is the objection, already mentioned, which Socrates never answered nor probably even realized. What is the answer to it?

The close of the fifth century B.C. saw what we have seen in our own days, a radical revision of accepted views on theology, morals, politics. The age of criticism was in full swing by the second half of the fifth century, and it was with the sense that the firm earth of traditional belief was slipping under their feet that the Athenians entered into a war which was to make it still more unstable. The analogy with our own times is curiously exact.²

There are two possible attitudes to such situations. One method is to denounce the criticism and the critics, to urge men to shut their ears and minds and to stand firm on the virtues and beliefs which have

¹ See p. 142.

² See Livingstone, *Greek Ideals and Modern Problems*, p. 116 f.

served the past so well. That—the attitude of Anytus—is the natural, instinctive, plausible, conservative attitude, but it is futile and fatal, for it does not arrest intellectual revolution, it leads to extravagances on both sides, and it delays the coming of the day when the world can settle down to a faith based on fact. The method of Socrates was different. He threw himself into the intellectual turmoil on the side of intellect, asked what really were the facts, and dug down to the firm rock which lay, somewhere, certainly, below the shifting sands of opinion. There was nothing, no paradox or heresy or opinion however extreme, that he was unwilling or afraid to consider. No wonder that the young flocked to talk to a man who was neither shocked by strange views nor carried off his feet by them, but was ready to discuss them with frankness and without evasion. Socrates has left us a permanent and perfect pattern of the way in which to meet the confusion, distress, and extravagance of an age of intellectual unrest. It was inevitable that much of his work should be destructive, and that has its dangers. It must have been amusing, but it could hardly have been very salutary for the youth who came to Socrates for the pleasure of hearing their elders puzzled, out-argued, and exposed; nor again for clever young men to whom these problems were as bones to puppies, material to be worried and played with; nor again for the negative type of intellectual who is more ardent in exploding follies and inconsistencies than in pressing on to knowledge and truth.¹ Socrates could not help that. Some people he may have injured, but they must have been few, for,

¹ A modern study of this problem is P. Bourget's *Le Disciple*.

as he points out, none of them or their relations could be found to witness against him. He is not to be blamed for Alcibiades and Critias. Auditors of his they certainly were, but a man cannot be held responsible for the characters of those with whom he talks, and they were never members of the small circle of his 'disciples'. Further, though Socrates seemed, and in a sense was, typical of the critical spirit, he was not its creator. He found it already in Athens, eating into traditional belief, and his work was to give it a new direction. It is true that he was a critic and a destructive critic; but it was not only the old ideas, the conservative tradition, that he probed. He cross-examined equally the new thought, the radical critics, to see how far their ideas would stand the test. Conservatives like Anytus figure in his dialogues; but the names of famous sophists, men of the new enlightenment, give the title to several of them, and the greatest, the *Republic*, starts by the examination of a believer in the doctrine that Might is Right, and of two very modern representatives of the younger generation. That is a point which never occurred to Anytus.

Nor is it correct to regard Socrates as purely negative, and to say that he cleared the ground and that his pupil Plato built on it. The facts contradict this view: witness not only works like the *Republic*, but the *Phaedo* itself. If these are not constructive, what is? And if we argue that the positive element in them is the work of Plato, then we must explain why in Xenophon's portrait of him Socrates is a practical teacher, helping men to rebuild their lives on a foundation of reason. No; to conceive Socrates

as negative is to misconceive him completely. As we shall see later,¹ not only is his whole aim positive, but it depends on positive beliefs, firmly held and inspiring his activity. In the end his method justified itself and brought the Greek world to firm ground, when Plato and later schools of Greek philosophy, of all of which he was in some sense the progenitor, laid a new foundation for the moral and spiritual life which lasted through the Graeco-Roman world² and, taken up into the theology of Christianity, survives to-day.

If we complain of his procedure, it is partly because we think truth easier of attainment than it is, partly because we are blind to a law which holds in knowledge as well as in religion—the law that no progress can be made while men are contented with themselves. Self-satisfaction with our opinions is the fatal obstacle to knowledge of truth. In the religious life conviction of sin is the preliminary to salvation; in the intellectual life the preliminary to progress is a conviction of error and ignorance, which is quite as rare as the conviction of sin. That conviction of ignorance Socrates endeavoured to enforce on the Athenians, because he thought it the way to knowledge (and he enforced it the more ardently because he believed that right knowledge brought right conduct and that a man who knew an action to be right would do it). His mission was to show his countrymen—sophists and representatives of the new enlightenment as well as others—that ‘while they thought they were wise they were not wise’, that the

¹ p. xliii f.

² ‘The Academy (or School of Plato) lasted till 529 A.D. . . . No modern university has yet existed for so long.’ Burnet, *Platonism*, p. 50.

mere throwing out of bright opinions is not thought, though it is often mistaken for it, and that truth in morals and politics as well as in natural science is only reached by solid brain-work and patient investigation. Hence his great and characteristic saying, 'the uncriticized life is not worth living'. Few people could repeat these words and mean them, for the uncriticized life is the life which most of us lead, prefer to lead, and are annoyed if we are prevented from leading. Hence his 'first object was to clear the ground, to rid men's minds of their ignorance, to reveal to them their actual short-coming. Like Bacon, he set himself the task of throwing entirely aside received theories and conceptions and of applying his mind, so cleansed afresh, to facts. The first step in his method was destructive. It was to convict and convince men of their ignorance by means of his wonderful cross-examination. He was for ever bringing to the test the current commonplaces, the unexpressed popular judgments about life, which were never examined or revised and the truth of which was taken for granted by everyone.'¹

Doubtless this is upsetting and even dangerous. But—again like religion—the intellectual life, if taken seriously, is neither easy nor secure, and those who are not prepared to face its difficulties would do well to decline it. Men of science recognize this, but the standards which are accepted in science are ignored in the more difficult field of social, political, and moral studies. A pathologist does not lay down the law about a bacillus without being sure about what bacillus he is talking, but Meno is prepared to

¹ Church, *Trial and Death of Socrates*, xlix.

discuss how goodness can be taught without a clear idea of what it is; and we are often like Meno. Men who would never imagine that questions of physics and chemistry can be solved by bright impromptus sometimes act as if this method is reasonable and effective in dealing with the obscurer and more momentous problems of human conduct. Yet thinking about great political, moral, and religious questions, though often undertaken with singular light-heartedness, is a very difficult task. It is not necessary perhaps to think about them, but if we are going to deal with such vital issues, to use freely words like 'democracy', 'freedom', 'culture', 'education', it will be well if we can find some one to sift our opinions as penetrating, pertinacious, and passionately sincere as Socrates.

We talk, sometimes rather vaguely, of the scientific habit of mind. Socrates had it. In him we meet a difficult and unpopular virtue, indispensable to progress, the passion for truth; not in physical science, where human interests and passions are not involved, and where in consequence it is common, but in the field of conduct and life, where it is comparatively rare. He said of himself that he was a man who 'obeyed nothing in his nature except the reasoning which upon reflection seemed to him to be best', and that men 'must regard not what the crowd says of them but what truth will say'.¹ These are not empty claims. If Reason has ever been incarnate on earth, it was in the person of Socrates, and those who wish to see her face can see it in him. That is one element of his greatness and enduring power.

¹ p. 58.

We can see the uses of the Socratic technique to fifth-century Athens. It has exactly the same use to us and never was it more needed. Our age, too, is what is called an age of intellectual unrest, for the same reasons and with the same results. Those winds of free thought which swept in the fifth century through the streets of Athens, bringing with them speculations as bold and revolutionary as any men have ever conceived, have blown through our own world. We have our sophists, novelists, playwrights, publicists, sometimes really thinking, sometimes simply scattering abroad the spontaneous effervescence of a lively and acute intelligence, powerful with the public mind, international figures like Gorgias or Protagoras, and like them deriving a good income from their work. The settled orthodoxy of the early Victorians, in religion, politics, morals, is no more. They received their opinions from their parents, as if they were inalienable heirlooms. To-day the entail is broken and the heirlooms gone, and in their place is apt to accumulate a strange medley of miscellaneous beliefs—something heard in a play or read in a novel or in the review of a book, the opinions of a novelist on Immortality or of the *Daily Express* on Free Love—till the mind is like a dusty bandbox, full of stray ideas, and when you open it, it is a mere accident what happens to be on top. How salutary if these opinions were submitted to the cold, searching analysis of the Socratic technique! for the journalists to be asked why they used the words 'romantic' or 'dramatic', and the critics why they described a book as 'a masterpiece', and any of us what we meant when we spoke of civilization or personality or humanism

or education, or said that something was just or immoral or religious or democratic or liberal. All of us can think of contemporary 'sophists'—politicians, journalists, and others, who would be the better for an hour or so of public cross-examination by Socrates; all of us would be the better for it ourselves. For it is essential that, if we are going to hold views, to believe in fascism or communism or democracy or pacifism, we should really be sure what they mean and whether our views hold water. Otherwise, like those Athenians, 'we shall think ourselves wise when we are not'; and that is a very dangerous state. No method for testing ideas has ever been devised as good as that which Socrates devised, and no age has ever needed that method more than our own. But he has not been reincarnated in our generation, and one of its tragedies is that when it needed a Socrates it got a Shaw.

In our emphasis on the intellectual ideal and technique of Socrates, we risk forgetting the other and even greater reason for studying Socrates—Socrates himself. In condemning the extreme asceticism of the fifth-century anchorite, Lecky complains that it had become the ideal of the nations which 'had known the writings of Plato and Cicero and the lives of Socrates and Cato'. The *life* of Socrates—not his philosophy. The doctrine is inseparable from the man and the man is even greater than the doctrine. What made his life a pattern to the ancient world? An outsider might suppose that he did little but worry people, expose their mistakes, and upset their ideas. But that is not how those who knew him well

regarded him. Here is the impression he made on an unlikely person, Alcibiades—the cleverest and most fashionable young man in Athens, and by no means a model character, who says: ‘I have heard Pericles and other great orators, but I was never moved by them or made to feel my slavish state. But Socrates here has often brought me to such a pass that I have felt that I could hardly endure the life I was leading and that if I did not shut my ears against him I should grow old sitting at his feet. For he forces me to admit that I ought not to live as I do, neglecting the wants of my soul and busied with public affairs.’¹ That is how Socrates affected Alcibiades. A man must do something more than cross-question people to make them feel like that. What was the side in Socrates which produced that effect?

In the first place it is the man himself. He was a philosopher, an intellectual: his great, indeed his only interests in life were, first science, later, replacing this, what he calls ‘the noblest of all studies, the study of what a man should be and what he should pursue’. But the impression he makes on us, especially in the *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo*—is of something much more than a mere thinker. There have been intellects in human history equal or superior to his—Plato, Aristotle, Pascal, Kant; there have been men with equally great moral force—Ignatius Loyola and John Wesley had as much. What is uncommon is the union of great intellect and great moral force in one man.

Let us try and form an idea of him, forgetting the dialogues, and judging him from episodes in his life,

¹ *Symposium* 215.

of which we happen to have descriptions. We are told how, on military service in a bitter Thracian winter, he stood in the open for twenty-four hours on end thinking about some problem (discipline in the Athenian citizen army was casual); how, when other people stayed in their tents because of the cold or wrapped themselves up to go out, Socrates went about in his ordinary clothes and walked barefoot on the ice; how when food ran short he never seemed to mind; how he rarely drank wine, but, when he had to do so, could take more than any one else and yet remain sober. (That side of him no doubt appealed to Alcibiades.) We see in those instances, what we should never guess from the discussions, that he had an iron physique. Then there are descriptions of him in another aspect; in the army retreating from the defeat of Delium, stalking along 'like a pelican' and looking so formidable that no one dared to attack him; in the Athenian assembly, facing the angry crowd and refusing to put an illegal motion to the vote; and later similarly refusing to arrest an innocent man at the bidding of the all-powerful Thirty Tyrants.¹ His character, like his physique, could stand any stress. What impressed men in Socrates was Socrates himself—a man equally strong in body, brains, and character.

Then there was his teaching. All that cross-questioning, which seems so tiresome, so negative, had a positive purpose. Here is his own description of it: 'I spend my whole life in going about and persuading you all to give your first and chiefest care to the perfection of your souls, and not till you have done

¹ p. 31.

that to think of your bodies, or your wealth; and telling you that virtue does not come from wealth, but that wealth and every other good thing which men have, whether in public or in private, comes from virtue.' 'As long as I have breath and strength I will not cease from philosophy, and from exhorting you, and declaring the truth to every one of you whom I meet, saying, as my way is, "My excellent friend, you are a citizen of Athens, a city which is very great and very famous for wisdom and power of mind; are you not ashamed of caring so much for the making of money, and for reputation, and for honour? Will you not think or care about wisdom, and truth, and the perfection of your soul?" And if he disputes my words, and says that he does care about these things, I shall not forthwith release him and go away: I shall question him and cross-examine him and test him.' In these words is revealed another, not-to-be-forgotten Socrates. He is the questioner, the tester, the man who finds it intolerable to lead an uncriticized life or to allow others to lead it. But his criticism springs not from such familiar sources as spleen or disillusionment or annoyance with human stupidity or a desire *épater le bourgeois*, but from ardent positive beliefs. This sceptic who questioned so many things never doubted the existence of God, the moral order of the universe, or the supreme reality and value of the life of the soul. This (forgotten sometimes by those who think of him only as a rationalist) is the fixed basis, the *point de manœuvre* of his scepticism; this is the iron strength under all that flexibility of intellect; this is what drew his pupils to follow him. Without it his criticism might have kept its point and edge,

but would have lost its fruitfulness and power. Indeed, in the absence of some fixed belief, if only in the value of truth (and to believe in truth is to believe in much besides), a critic might perhaps do better to suppress his criticism, like a patient in a hospital ward, who bears his pains in silence instead of waking his fellow sufferers from their uneasy slumbers to a consciousness of their distress.

At any rate, the positive aim of these cross-examinations is clear. Socrates did not teach by preaching or appealing to the emotions, but, as a lawyer with a witness, he tried by questions to bring truth to light. If you had asked him why he did that, he would have said: 'I want to clear people's minds of error and lead them to see things as they really are. How can a man do what is right, unless he knows what is right?' This teaching impressed people—it changed the life of Plato and others: it impressed Alcibiades deeply, though, like the young man with great possessions, he turned away from it. (That—the impression and the turning away—is the most interesting thing in the story of Alcibiades.)

Nor was it mere preaching. 'Edifying morality', said Charles the Second, 'is as easy as lying', and few moralists have the chance of showing if they are as good as their precepts. But Socrates lived as he believed. He led a missionary's life and it brought him poverty and unpopularity and he minded neither, and because the world, whatever it does itself, respects and, almost against its will, is influenced by whole-hearted sacrifice, the teaching and life and example of Socrates have always impressed men. Nor is that all. The missionary's life ended in a

martyr's death. He could easily have escaped. He had only to promise to cease his teaching and he would have been acquitted. Even after condemnation, he could have escaped from prison, but he declined on the ground that if you were a citizen of a state you must obey its laws. There again we see the man.

The way in which Socrates accepted his sentence is characteristic. He was going to leave the things which men care for most—family, friends, life-work, and intellectual interests, life itself, and he might well have been smarting under the misrepresentation of his accusers and the injustice of the verdict. He had not even the satisfaction of popular sympathy. Most people in Athens thought that he had got his deserts and felt that his chief prosecutor, Anytus, a very decent, public-spirited politician, had done a service to the State by getting rid of an upsetting influence. No one minded much except the small body of Socrates' disciples, who left the court sad, indignant, and helpless. These are his last words to the jury: 'You too, my judges, must face death with a good courage and hold it true that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. His fortunes are not neglected by God, and what has come to me to-day has not come by chance. And so I am hardly angry with my accusers or with those who condemned me to die. And now the time has come and we must go hence; I to die and you to live. Whether life or death is better is known to God and to God alone.' So Socrates accepted his sentence. The Greeks do not talk about faith—there is no Greek word for it—but this *is* faith, the real thing, a

conviction that persecution and injustice and death have no power against goodness and that compared with it they mean very little. People who have that conviction, as Socrates had it, give the impression of immense strength. Nothing, one feels, can injure them; they have what the Prayer Book calls the peace that passes understanding. If one lesson to be learnt from Socrates is the habit of examining our opinions closely, another lesson can be summed up by saying that, like Christ, he made on men the impression that here was some one who knew what kind of life men should live and who lived it.

THE CHIEF SOURCES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE OF SOCRATES

So far I have not dealt with the sources of our knowledge of Socrates and the problem which they present. He himself wrote nothing, but there are three contemporary accounts of him, the earliest of which is a caricature in a comedy, *The Clouds*, by Aristophanes; the other two are by followers who were respectively 28 and 31 when he died, Plato and Xenophon. Xenophon wrote a number of works competently mediocre in everything except their admirable style and including *Memoirs of Socrates*:¹ Plato wrote dialogues on philosophy in most of which Socrates is the chief speaker. They were very different men: Xenophon, a soldier and man of action, fond of hunting and country life, but with intellectual interests

¹ Translated in *Socratic Discourses* (Everyman).

—a rather English type recalling Napier or Viscount Grey—Plato, a member of a famous Athenian family and perhaps the greatest of philosophers. Their accounts of their master are as different as the men. In Plato's dialogues Socrates is a mystic and poet as well as a thinker, he has a definite metaphysic, he is concerned chiefly with abstract questions and with practical questions in their more abstract aspects, he argues not with the common people, but exclusively with educated men. In Xenophon's memoirs he discusses sensibly and unimaginatively, with all sorts of persons, problems of which many are purely practical, and though he has a philosophic method, he can hardly be said to have a philosophy. We see him talking on the study of astronomy, the care of health, simplicity in food, patience with an irritable mother, religious observances, methods of gaining and retaining friends, the fallacies of an epicurean individualism, the qualifications for a political or a military career. He is neither a mystic nor a metaphysician: indeed at times he is barely distinguishable from Samuel Smiles or Martin Tupper. The portrait of him reveals the character and opinions of Xenophon as much as those of Socrates. Yet there is something which is not Xenophon or Samuel Smiles: the iron strength of body, mind, and character; the incessant insistence on the practice of 'virtue' in that wide Greek sense of the word which includes the achievement of the best in every field, from art to athletics, from family life to politics or war; the testing both of opinions and conduct by the standard of reason; the steady search, when any problem arises, for a general principle to apply to the particular case.

Greek literature presents us with two of the chief literary puzzles of the world, both fascinating, both insoluble, and neither important for the enjoyment or appreciation of the works that give rise to them—Who wrote the Homeric poems? and Is the Platonic or the Xenophontic Socrates the real man? The two chief English Platonic scholars of recent times have argued whole-heartedly, with great knowledge and acumen, in favour of Plato, and it is with the more reluctance that I express a different opinion.¹ The portrait in the *Memorabilia* is clearly inadequate; there Socrates is generally flat and banal, the opinions which he expresses are sometimes those of Xenophon, and, if he had been as Xenophon paints him, few would have endured to listen to him and no one have troubled to put him to death. But I believe that Xenophon is useful as a corrective, and that without him we might form as misleading a picture of Socrates as we should form of Christ, if the Synoptic Gospels had been lost and only St. John preserved. I think that Plato has omitted the element of earthly common sense and robust practicality which appears in the *Memorabilia*, imparted to his master some of his own poetical quality of mind, and drawn out his ideas into a system which may be implicit in them, but which Socrates himself never developed. In the biographical parts of Plato we can trust his portrait of Socrates: there is no reason, therefore, to doubt the historical accuracy of the beginning and end of the *Phaedo* or of the picture of Socrates given by the

¹ See A. E. Taylor, *Plato*, and Burnet, *Greek Philosophy*; and on the other side Sir W. D. Ross in the *Proceedings of the Classical Association* for 1933 (an admirably balanced review).

Apology; but it may be questioned whether in the philosophical discussions the voice is not often that of his pupil.

THE DIALOGUE FORM

THE dialogue form, of which Plato is the creator and probably the greatest master, is tiresome to many English readers, who are not used to it, find the quick to-and-fro flight of its shuttlecock difficult to follow, and prefer ideas expounded directly. Plato no doubt adopted it because discussion by conversation was the method of Socrates and in his opinion the best safeguard of clear thinking, since, though fallacy and dialogue are compatible, the flaws are more easily detected in the close web of its crossing warp and woof than in the loose texture of straightforward exposition. Apart from this the dialogue form has a dramatic value. We have the impression of Socrates not as a mere producer of philosophic theory, but as a man talking, and the problems discussed arise naturally in the course of conversation, instead of being dragged into the foreground by an author who wishes to argue about them. Note, for instance, the admirably natural way in which an ordinary talk between friends leads in the *Crito* to a discussion of the rights of the state and in the *Phaedo* to a debate on immortality.

Nothing could be more masterly than the grace and naturalness of the opening of a Platonic dialogue, or more vivid than the picture which it gives of an urbane, educated society. There Plato has never been equalled. The general construction, too, is

admirable; particularly in the *Phaedo*, the breaks and pauses in the conversation, the development of the argument, its successive steps are perfectly managed. But in this and other dialogues the philosophic discussion itself is apt to be formal, lacking the variety and play of real talk: the immediate and unqualified replies of the Platonic dialogue are not true to life; question and answer succeed each other like a long and uneventful rally at tennis, and however interested we may be in the result of the game we are not entertained by the actual play.¹ Plato's reply to such a criticism might have been that when he came to the actual argument, to the hard business of discussion, he was concerned not with variety or art but with truth; that his conversation took the most direct road to a conclusion, and that to admit anything like the discursiveness of a real conversation into the hard business of philosophic argument would distract his readers from their goal, and make them lose the thread which led to it.

SOME GREEK WORDS

In a journey into foreign thought, as into a foreign country, it is necessary to know the relation of its currency to one's own. An alien people may have feelings and shades of thought which English cannot express, and it may have words, apparently the same as our own, which mean something very different. There is no foreign equivalent for 'gentleman,' no English one for *Kultur*; and 'sensible' and 'spiritual'

¹ The philosophic conversation is far more like a real discussion in Lowes Dickinson's *Meaning of Good* than in any dialogue of Plato.

are by no means the same as *sensible* and *spirituel*. The same difficulty occurs in Greek. It has some words for which there is no equivalent in our language, and others which resemble English words in form but are unlike them in meaning. No English word will render ἀρετή and σωφροσύνη (*areté* and *sophrosyné*), which are among the most important and profound of Greek moral conceptions, while 'philosophy' and 'idea' are very misleading renderings of φιλοσοφία (*philosophia*) and of the Platonic ἰδέα or εἶδος (*idea*, *eidos*). The following paragraphs attempt to explain the meaning of some of the more important words occurring in this book which need explanation.

Philosophia. One must dismiss entirely from the mind the modern conception of a philosopher—a specialist interested in certain branches of thought such as metaphysics, ethics, and logic—remember the literal meaning of the word, 'love of wisdom', and envisage the sort of person whom Plato had in mind when he said that the philosopher was 'a man ready and eager to taste *every* kind of knowledge, who addresses himself to its pursuit joyfully and with an insatiable appetite', and that 'the mood of the philosopher is wonder; there is no other source of philosophy than this'.¹ There are no restrictions on the appetite of the 'philosopher' for knowledge; science, history, metaphysics, every branch of study, fascinate him, excite his curiosity, awake his 'wonder', and stir him to press on, by their means but beyond them, to something higher still than knowledge—wisdom. It is the vision of intellectual explorers opening up a

¹ *Republic* 475; *Theaet.* 155.

new world, and impracticable, yet not to be forgotten, in our own age of inevitable specialism; but the spirit of the Greek 'philosopher' is of the essence of the intellectual life, even if his limitless ambitions must be renounced.

Dikaios, dikaiosyné. In English 'just' and 'justice' are commonly used to describe fairness, equitable conduct. In Greek, though used also in this narrower sense, they have normally a far wider meaning and are used to cover the whole of right conduct: where we should say 'a good man', the Greek says 'a just man': where we should say 'bad', the Greek says 'unjust'. There is no exact English equivalent; 'righteousness', the nearest, has a religious tinge. Perhaps 'goodness' is the best rendering.

Kalos. The Greek used the word *καλός*, as we use 'beautiful', to express the emotions aroused by a lovely face, scene, or building. But he also calls moral and intellectual excellence *καλά*; a good life or a perfect action gave him a feeling which he felt somehow akin to that given by beauty of form or colour, by the Parthenon or the sculptures at Olympia. It is worth while trying to put oneself at this point of view of a people who were quick to feel beauty and find it in many aspects and relations of life. The peculiar Greek use of the word is found in English in such phrases as 'a beautiful argument' or 'a beautiful life', but is rarer with us than in Greek.

In translations *καλός* is usually rendered 'noble', which does not in the least convey its meaning. 'Noble' is a metaphor from good birth and suggests

the characteristics which might be expected from an aristocrat. The Greeks have a similar metaphor, *γενναῖος*, which is used as a term of praise and exactly corresponds to 'noble'.

When 'soul' appears in a translation from the Greek, it usually represents the word *ψυχή* (*psychê*); but the Greek word has a very different history and associations from the English. At first it means simply the principle of life: the Greek saw that men were living, asked himself why, and answered that they, unlike wood or stone, had something in them called a *ψυχή*, which makes them alive and disappears at death, 'scattered into fragments like breath or smoke'.¹ There is no suggestion that it is spiritual. It is simply the life in them. Burnet holds that before Socrates there is no suggestion 'that the "soul" has anything to do with knowledge or ignorance, goodness or badness', and that he was the first to say that the *ψυχή* 'was the true self and that it deserved all the care bestowed on the body's mysterious tenant by the religious'.²

Sophrosynê is usually translated 'temperance', less commonly 'self-control', 'sobriety', 'sanity', 'balance'. None of these renderings is adequate. To understand *sophrosynê*, think of the vice to which a quick, sensitive, emotional people like the Greeks are most liable, and the virtue which they most need. Their danger is excess. *Sophrosynê* is the quality which

¹ *Phaedo*, p. 108.

² 'The Socratic Doctrine of the Soul', in *Essays and Addresses*, pp. 156, 160.

enables them to walk safely along the narrow knife-edge between the precipices of extremes.

Next, think of this quality as having a range far beyond temperance (as we use the word). *Sophrosyné* stretches out and tends to become the whole of virtue, an inner harmony of the soul, a reasonableness which reveals itself in every action and attitude. It saves the individual from physical excess, from extravagance of thought and word, from the arrogance that exaggerates his capacities, and the ambition that overleaps itself. The Greeks would have found it absent in the drunkard and the debauchee, but also in Luther and Napoleon and in some more recent national heroes, in the advocates of the class-war, in militarists and extreme pacifists, in the optimists who thought that the world would be regenerated by science, and in the pessimists who despair of civilization. It is an especially difficult virtue for politicians; no one finds it easy in times of social and political tension; and in war-time it vanishes almost entirely—especially among civilians.

Finally, conceive a quality which is positive. This removes it far from the barren slackness which is neither hot nor cold, from the type of Liberalism which Matthew Arnold described as moral indifference without intellectual ardour, and from a mere colourless self-control. It is, in the literal meaning of the Greek word, 'soundness of mind'. Restraint is of its essence, but is felt, not as restraint nor as a drag on natural instinct nor as an infringement of liberty, but as that natural service to right reason which is perfect freedom. Indeed *sophrosyné* is, or ought to be, pre-eminently the virtue of an educated

man. Plato describes those who possess it by saying that they are 'stronger than themselves'; the source of their strength over self is the wisdom that is the essence of *sophrosyné*.

Sophrosyné can take, as we have seen, many forms. These dialogues contain perfect examples of two of them. The close of the *Phaedo* shows it in the art of writing, the character of Socrates shows it in man. A good, though not quite perfect, example of it among our own countrymen is Sir Thomas More

For *areté* see p. 7; for 'idea' see p. 78.

APOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

THE *Apology*, *Crito*, and *Phaedo* may be regarded as three acts in a drama—the Death of Socrates. The scene of the first is a court of law, and in it we see him in the world of his fellow citizens. The scene of the other two acts is the prison, and in these we see him with his friends.

The *Crito* and *Phaedo* are dialogues, the *Apology* professes to be the speech made at the trial by Socrates in his defence. Indeed 'Defence' or 'Answer' would be a better title than 'Apology', which, though a literal rendering of the Greek word *ἀπολογία*, is a misleading translation, unless we take it in the sense in which Newman used the word in his *Apologia pro vita sua*. Like that book, this 'Apology' is an attempt to explain and justify a life and a life-work. Touching lightly on the actual indictment, it proceeds to clear away popular misconceptions of what Socrates was, and to expound what he did, why he did it, and why it was right that he should do it.

It is generally assumed that Plato wrote the *Apology* two or three years after the event—he could hardly have written so calmly under the immediate shadow of his master's death—but he was present at the trial, and though no one supposes that the speech is an exact reproduction of what Socrates had said, there is a presumption that it would follow the general line of his arguments. We may either believe, with Professor A. E. Taylor,¹ that his version 'in substance

¹ *Plato*, p. 156.

has preserved the actual speech', or, with Professor Robin, that Plato 'made Socrates say everything that he himself thought it desirable to say to his readers, but at the same time imitated his manner closely and even reproduced quite accurately certain episodes of the case and certain statements or memorable phrases of the accused'.¹ We cannot know which of these views is correct, nor does it much matter. What is certain is that these pages reveal a unique personality, who could never be mistaken for Plato or for any one else, 'the sage with the acute mind and playful humour, hiding under the simplicity of his manners the soul of a hero and the virtues of a saint'.²

¹ *Apologie de Socrate*, p. 133.

² *Ib.*, p. 138.

APOLOGY

1. S. begins in the conventional way by explaining that he is not a skilful speaker.

How you, Athenians, have been affected by my accusers, I cannot tell; but I know that they almost made me forget who I was—so persuasively did they speak; and yet they have hardly uttered a word of truth. But of the many falsehoods told by them, there was one which quite amazed me;—I mean when they said that you should be upon your guard and not allow yourselves to be deceived by the force of my eloquence. To say this, when they were certain to be detected as soon as I opened my lips and proved myself to be anything but a great speaker, did indeed appear to me utterly shameless—unless by the force of eloquence they mean the force of truth; if such is their meaning, I admit that I am eloquent. But in how different a way from theirs! Well, as I was saying, they have scarcely spoken the truth at all; but from me you shall hear the whole truth: not, however, delivered after their manner in a set oration duly ornamented with words and phrases. No, by heaven! but I shall use the words and arguments which occur to me at the moment; for I am confident in the justice of my cause: at my time of life I ought surely not to appear before you, Athenians, juggling with words like a youth—let no one expect it of me. However, I must beg of you to grant me a favour:—If I defend myself in my accustomed manner, and you hear me using the words which I have been in the habit of using in the Market, at the

tables of the money-changers, or anywhere else, I would ask you not to be surprised, and not to interrupt me on this account. For I am more than seventy years of age, and appearing now for the first time in a court of law, I am quite a stranger to the language of the place; and therefore I would have you regard me as if I were really a stranger, whom
 18 you would excuse if he spoke in his native tongue, and after the fashion of his country:—Am I making an unfair request of you? Never mind the manner, which may or may not be good; but think only of the truth of my words, and attend to that: let the speaker speak truly and the juryman decide justly.

2. S. explains the case which he has to meet, dividing it into two heads. First there is the popular view of him, founded partly on the burlesques of comedy.

These chapters show that the man in the street regarded S. as a scientist and a 'sophist'. The meaning of the latter of these charges appears in c. 4. S.'s early scientific interests made him suspect of the atheistic views, supposed (not only in that age) to be proper to scientists.

FIRST, I have to reply to the older charges and to my first accusers, and then I will go on to the later ones. For in the past, too, I have had many accusers, who have accused me falsely to you during many years; and I am more afraid of them than of Anytus and his associates, who are dangerous, too, in their own way. But far more dangerous are the others, who began when you were children, and took possession of your minds with their falsehoods, telling of one Socrates,

a wise man, who speculated about the heaven above, and searched into the earth beneath, and made the worse appear the better cause. The disseminators of this tale are the accusers whom I dread; for their hearers are apt to fancy that such inquirers do not believe in the existence of the gods. And they are many, and their charges against me are of ancient date, and they were made by them in the days when you would have been most likely to believe them—in childhood, or it may have been in youth—and the cause when heard went by default, for there was none to answer. And hardest of all, I do not know and cannot tell the names of my accusers; unless in the chance case of a comic poet.¹ All who from envy and malice have persuaded you—some of them having first convinced themselves—all this class of men are most difficult to deal with; for I cannot have them up here, and cross-examine them, and therefore I must simply defend myself and argue with no one to answer—like fighting a shadow. I will ask you then to assume with me, as I was saying, that my opponents are of two kinds, one recent, the other ancient: and I hope that you will see the propriety of my answering the latter first, for these accusations you heard long before the others, and much oftener.

Well, then, I must make my defence, and 19

¹ In the extant *Clouds* of Aristophanes is described a 'Speculation-shop' or Phrontisterion in which S. is supposed to pursue scientific inquiries into celestial and subterranean phenomena, and to instruct pupils how to make 'the worse appear the better reason' (that is how conservative critics described the art of public speaking which the sophists professed to teach—an art indispensable in a democracy where every one might be a politician and where the litigant had to plead his own case in the courts). For S.'s early interest in science see *Phaedo* (p. 156 f.).

endeavour to clear away in a short time a slander which has been implanted in you over a long time. May I succeed, if to succeed be for my good and yours, or likely to avail me in my cause! The task is not an easy one; I quite understand the nature of it. And so, leaving the event with God, in obedience to the law I will now make my defence.

3. I WILL begin at the beginning, and ask what is the accusation which has given rise to the slander of me, and in fact has encouraged Meletus to prefer this charge against me. Well, what do the slanderers say? They shall be my prosecutors, and I will sum up their words in an affidavit: 'Socrates is an evil-doer, and a meddler, who searches into things under the earth and in heaven, and he makes the worse appear the better cause; and he teaches the aforesaid doctrines to others.' Such is the nature of the accusation: it is just what you have yourselves seen in the comedy of Aristophanes, who has introduced a man whom he calls Socrates, swinging about and saying that he walks in air,¹ and talking a deal of nonsense concerning matters of which I do not pretend to know either much or little—not that I mean to speak disparagingly of scientific knowledge, if any possesses it. I should be very sorry if Meletus could bring enough suits against me to make me do that. But the simple truth is, Athenians, that I have nothing to do with physical speculations. Very many of those here present are witnesses to the truth of this, and to them I appeal. Speak then, you who have heard me,

¹ In the *Clouds*, S. is introduced swinging in the air, a suitable posture for a philosopher, remote from the contagion of earth.

and tell your neighbours whether any of you have ever known me hold forth in few words or in many upon such matters. (*Shouts of 'No!'*) You hear their answer. And from what they say of this part of the charge you will be able to judge of the truth of the rest.

4. *For the sophists see Introduction, p. xiv. In this chapter we have a glimpse of them, of their teaching and fees, and of the intellectual interest of the age, and of what it sought from education. Of the sophists here mentioned one is a Sicilian, one from western Greece, and two from the Islands. The fee of Evenus for his course is about £20 (perhaps £100 in our money). Another famous sophist, Protagoras, charged on occasion twenty times as much.*

The word here translated 'virtue' (which the sophists professed to teach) is one of the fundamental and most fruitful conceptions in Greek thought. The Greeks held that everything and every one was capable of a perfection belonging to its nature, which they called its areté, its excellence or 'virtue', and that the object of life was to discover and achieve this 'virtue'. The 'virtue' of a knife was to cut well, of a horse to run fast, of a sculptor to carve well, of a doctor to make and keep his patients healthy, and so on. Man, too, like everything else, has a peculiar 'virtue' or excellence of which he is capable, and the sons of Callias went to Evenus because they thought that he could teach them 'human and political virtue', i.e. how to make the best of themselves as human beings and as politicians. Greek Philosophy is, inter alia, the search for human 'virtue', and the importance of the

Greeks in the world is partly that they were the first people to ask what it is and to give a satisfying answer.

As little foundation is there for the report that I am a teacher, and take money; this accusation has no more truth in it than the other—although, if a man were really able to instruct mankind, to receive money for giving instruction would, in my opinion, be an honour to him. There is Gorgias of Leontini, and Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis, who go the round of the cities, and are able to persuade the young men to leave their own citizens by whom they²⁰ might be taught for nothing, and come to them whom they not only pay, but are thankful if they may be allowed to pay them. There is at this time a Parian philosopher residing in Athens, of whom I have heard; and I came to hear of him in this way:—I came across a man who has spent a world of money on the sophists, Callias, the son of Hipponicus, and knowing that he had sons, I asked him: ‘Callias,’ I said, ‘if your two sons were foals or calves, there would be no difficulty in finding some one to put over them; we should hire a trainer of horses, or a farmer probably, who would improve and perfect them in their own proper “virtue” and excellence; but as they are human beings, whom are you thinking of placing over them? Is there any one who understands human and political “virtue”? You must have thought about the matter, for you have sons; is there any one?’ ‘There is,’ he said. ‘Who is he?’ said I; ‘and of what country? and what does he charge?’ ‘Evenus the Parian,’ he replied; ‘he is the

man, and his charge is five minae.' Happy is Evenus, I said to myself, if he really has this wisdom, and teaches at such a moderate charge. Had I the same, I should have been very proud and conceited; but the truth is that I have no knowledge of the kind.

5. *No smoke without some fire; there must be some reason for the unpopularity of S. In c. 5-10 he gives it and his conception of his life work, as a preacher of the need of wisdom. Note his idea of wisdom (c. 9). If we imagine any one in our country doing to politicians, literary men, journalists, artists, and artisans what S. did in Athens, we can realize why he was unpopular.*

I DARE say, Athenians, that some one among you will reply, 'Yes, Socrates, but what is the origin of these accusations which are brought against you? There must have been something strange which you have been doing? All these rumours and this talk about you would never have arisen if you had been like other men: tell us, then, what is the cause of them, for we should be sorry to judge hastily of you.' Now I regard this as a fair challenge, and I will endeavour to explain to you the reason why I have got this name and this bad reputation. Please to attend then. And although some of you may think that I am joking, I declare that I will tell you the entire truth. Men of Athens, this reputation of mine has come of a certain sort of wisdom which I possess. If you ask me what kind of wisdom, I reply, the wisdom which, I think, belongs to man;¹ for to that extent I am inclined to believe that I am wise, whereas

¹ Chapter 9 (p. 14) indicates what this wisdom is.

the persons of whom I was speaking have a superhuman wisdom, which I may fail to describe, because I have it not myself; and he who says that I have, speaks falsely, and is taking away my character. And here, men of Athens, I must beg you not to interrupt me, even if I seem to say something extravagant. For the word which I will speak is not mine. I will refer you to a witness who is worthy of credit; that witness shall be the God of Delphi—he will tell you about my wisdom, if I have any, and of what sort it is. You must have known Chaerephon; he was early
21 a friend of mine, and also a friend of yours, for he shared in the recent exile of the people, and returned with you.¹ Well, Chaerephon, as you know, was very impetuous in all his doings, and he went to Delphi and boldly asked the oracle to tell him whether—as I was saying, I must beg you not to interrupt—he asked the oracle to tell him whether any one was wiser than I was, and the Pythian prophetess answered, that there was no man wiser. Chaerephon is dead himself; but his brother, who is in court, will confirm the truth of what I am saying.

6. WHY do I mention this? Because I am going to explain to you why I have such an evil name. When I heard the answer, I said to myself, What can the god mean, and what is the interpretation of his riddle? for I know that I have no wisdom, small or great. What then can he mean when he says that I

¹ In the struggle with the Thirty Tyrants the democratic party temporarily evacuated Athens. Chaerephon, a member of the party, was with them, and his evidence, to which S. here appeals, would naturally carry weight with a democratic jury. The oracle was that of the Pythian Apollo at Delphi—the most famous in Greece.

am the wisest of men? And yet he is a god, and cannot lie; that would be against his nature. After great hesitation, I thought of the following method of trying the question. I reflected that if I could only find a man wiser than myself, then I might go to the god with a refutation in my hand. I should say to him, 'Here is a man who is wiser than I am; but you said that I was the wisest.' Accordingly I went to one who had the reputation of wisdom, and observed him—his name I need not mention; he was a politician whom I selected for examination¹—and the result was as follows: When I began to talk with him, I could not help thinking that he was not really wise, although he was thought wise by many, and still wiser by himself; and thereupon I tried to explain to him that he thought himself wise, but was not really wise; and the consequence was that he hated me, and his enmity was shared by several who were present and heard me. So I left him, saying to myself, as I went away: Well, although I do not suppose that either of us knows anything really beautiful and good,² I am better off than he is—for he knows nothing, and thinks that he knows; I neither know nor think that I know.³ In this one small point then I seem to have

¹ Presumably Anytus, who takes part in a discussion with S. in the *Meno*.

² The conception of the *καλοκάγαθός*, the man who is 'beautiful and good', appears in Athens in the late fifth century and throws as interesting a light on national ideals as do the use of 'gentleman' in English, or *Gebildeter* in German. S. means that neither he nor the politician reached the human ideal, but that he had one advantage over the politician—he was aware of his defects. Later passages in the *Apology* show that S. is in fact by no means so agnostic as this chapter might suggest.

³ To S. intellectual humility is the basis of wisdom. His sceptical attitude may seem unsuitable to an age when the minds of men were at

the advantage of him. Then I went to another who had still higher pretensions to wisdom, and my conclusion was exactly the same. Whereupon I made another enemy of him, and of many others besides him.

7. THEN I went to one man after another, becoming conscious of the enmity which I provoked, and it distressed and alarmed me: but necessity was laid upon me—the word of God, I thought, ought to be considered first. And I said to myself, Go I must to all who appear to know, and find out the meaning of the
 22 oracle. And I swear to you, Athenians, by the dog¹ I swear!—for I must tell you the truth—the result of my mission was just this: I found that the men most in repute were all but the most foolish; and that others less esteemed were really wiser and better. I will tell you the tale of my wanderings and of the ‘Herculean’ labours, as I may call them, which I endured only to find at last the oracle irrefutable. After the politicians, I went to the poets—tragic, dithyrambic, and all sorts. And there, I said to myself, you will be instantly detected; now you will find out that you are more ignorant than they are. Accordingly, I took them some of the most elaborate passages in their own writings, and asked what was the meaning of them—thinking that they would teach me something. Will you believe me? I am almost ashamed to confess the truth, but I must say that there was hardly a person present who would not sea, beliefs drifting, and the old landmarks lost. Yet the homoeopathic treatment of scepticism by scepticism may be the best remedy for such an age. The message of S. was, Think deeper.

¹ A common oath—‘a euphuism like Great Scott’ (Burnet).

have talked better about their poetry than they did themselves. Then I soon discovered that not by wisdom do poets write poetry, but by a natural gift and inspiration;¹ they are like diviners or soothsayers who also say many fine things, but do not understand the meaning of them. The poets appeared to me to be in much the same case; and I further observed that upon the strength of their poetry they believed themselves to be the wisest of men in other things in which they were not wise. So I departed, conceiving myself to be superior to them for the same reason that I was superior to the politicians.

8. At last I went to the artisans,² for I was conscious that I knew nothing at all, as I may say, and I was sure that they knew many fine things; and here I was not mistaken, for they did know many things of which I was ignorant, and in this they certainly were wiser than I was. But I observed that even the good artisans fell into the same error as the poets—because they were good workmen they thought that they also knew all sorts of high matters, and this defect in them overshadowed their wisdom; and

¹ Literally 'with god inside them': a theory of poetry which reappears in the metaphor of inspiration and in Shakespeare's 'fine frenzy'. For a discussion of it see the *Ion*. Petrarch's belief that his Latin epic *Africa*, which no one now would trouble to read, was his greatest work illustrates Plato's view that poets are bad judges of their own poetry.

² The artisans are 'the only class in which S. finds any knowledge at all. It includes not only manual labourers but also great artists like Phidias and Polygnotus' (Burnet). Note their form of error—not uncommon in experts. They know their own job well and suppose themselves able to speak with equal authority on politics, religion, and morals. Prof. Taylor quotes 'Chesterton's *mot* about "the authority which obviously attaches to the views of an electrical engineer" on the existence of God or the immortality of the soul'.

therefore I asked myself on behalf of the oracle, whether I would like to be as I was, having neither their knowledge nor their ignorance, or like them in both; and I made answer to myself and to the oracle that I was better off as I was.

9. THIS inquisition has led to my having many
23 enemies of the worst and most dangerous kind, and has given occasion also to many calumnies. And I am called wise,¹ for my hearers always imagine that I myself possess the wisdom which I find wanting in others: but the truth is, men of Athens, that God only is wise; and by his answer he intends to show that the wisdom of men is worth little or nothing; he is not speaking of Socrates, he is only using my name by way of illustration, as if he said, He is the wisest, who, like Socrates, knows that his wisdom is in truth worth nothing. And so I go about the world, obedient to the god, and search and make inquiry into the wisdom of any one, whether citizen or stranger, who appears to be wise; and if he is not wise, then in vindication of the oracle I show him that he is not wise; and my occupation quite absorbs me, and I have no time to give either to any public matter of interest or to any concern of my own, but I am in utter poverty by reason of my devotion to the god.

10. *Again an old story: The influence and effect of the prophet on the younger generation, and the intelligible annoyance of their elders. A (very inadequate) analogy is the influence of Bernard Shaw on pre-War youth.*

¹ The word was used of S. by his enemies in an unfavourable sense.

THERE is another thing:—young men of the richer classes, who have most leisure, come about me of their own accord; they like to hear the pretenders examined, and they often imitate me, and proceed to examine others; there are plenty of persons, as they quickly discover, who think that they know something, but really know little or nothing; and then those who are examined by them instead of being angry with themselves are angry with me: This confounded Socrates, they say; this villainous misleader of youth!—and then if somebody asks them, Why, what evil does he practise or teach? they do not know, and cannot tell; but in order that they may not appear to be at a loss, they repeat the stock charges which are used against all philosophers about teaching things up in the clouds and under the earth, and having no gods, and making the worse appear the better cause; for they do not like to confess that their pretence of knowledge has been detected—which is the truth; and as they are numerous and ambitious and energetic and vigorous and persuasive speakers, they have filled your ears with their loud and inveterate calumnies. And this is the reason why my three accusers, Meletus and Anytus and Lycon,¹ have set upon me: Meletus, who has a quarrel with me on behalf of the poets; Anytus, on behalf of the artisans and politicians; Lycon, on behalf of the politicians: and as I said at the beginning, I cannot expect to get rid of such a mass of calumny all in a moment. And this, men of Athens, is the truth and the whole truth; I have concealed nothing, I have dissembled nothing. And yet, I know that my

¹ See p. xxii.

plainness of speech makes them hate me, and what is their hatred but a proof that I am speaking the truth?—Hence has arisen the prejudice against me; and this is the reason of it, as you will find out either in this or in any future inquiry.

II. *Having dealt with the popular misconceptions of his character, S. proceeds to the actual indictment (see p. xxi). His argument is a good example of the cross-examinations which irritated the average Athenian, and, whatever its merits as intellectual fencing, is not a real reply to the charge. It only answers some rash statements into which Meletus is betrayed, and it annoyed the court. Burnet defends S. on this point by arguing that he tries to show that 'the ostensible charge is a mere pretext' by pointing out that 'the nominal prosecutor did not even know what it meant'.*

The actual argument is as follows: Meletus having declared that S. is the only corrupter of the youth in Athens, S. replies:

- (1) *By an analogy from the animal world;*
- (2) *By pointing out that it is not in his interests to make his fellow citizens bad.*

Then, leading Meletus on to accuse him of atheism, he has no difficulty in showing the inconsistency of this accusation with the original indictment which charged S. with 'believing in new divinities' or 'divine forces' (the word used is the neuter δαίμονια).

I HAVE said enough in my defence against the first class of my accusers; I turn to the second class. They are headed by Meletus, that good man and true lover of his country, as he calls himself. Against

these, too, I must try to make a defence:—Let their affidavit be read: it contains something of this kind: It says that Socrates is a doer of evil, who corrupts the youth; and who believes, not in the gods of the state, but in other new divinities. Such is the charge; and now let us examine the particular counts. He says that I am a doer of evil, and corrupt the youth; but I say, Athenians, that Meletus is a doer of evil, in that he pretends to be in earnest when he is only in jest, and so lightly brings men to trial from a pretended zeal and interest about matters in which he really never had the smallest interest. And the truth of this I will endeavour to prove to you.

12. COME here, Meletus, and let me ask a question of you.¹ You care a great deal about the improvement of youth?

Yes, I do.

Tell the jury, then, who is their improver; for you must know, as you have taken the pains to discover their corrupter, and are citing and accusing me before them. Speak, then, and tell the jury who their improver is.—Observe, Meletus, that you are silent, and have nothing to say. But is not this rather disgraceful, and a very considerable proof of what I was saying, that you have no interest in the matter? Speak up, friend, and tell us who their improver is.

The laws.²

¹ For the use of small print see p. viii.

² 'The answer every Athenian democrat would naturally give' (Burnet). We, who look at our laws differently, may be surprised at it. But the Athenians' view of law is that of a people which has lived in an age without it, and has seen law growing up in a lawless world, as an attempt to express not 'the will of the people' but what is just and rational (cp. Plato's conception of Law as Reason incarnate). This conception of Law (which goes with the conception of Democracy as an attempt to embody Reason and Justice in political institutions) is far profounder than our popular view of it.

But that, my good sir, is not my meaning. I want to know who the person is, who, in the first place, knows the laws.

The jury here, Socrates.

What, do you mean to say, Meletus, that they are able to instruct and improve youth?

Certainly they are.

What, all of them, or some only and not others?

All of them.

By the goddess Herè, that is good news! There are plenty
25 of improvers, then. And what do you say of the audience—
do they improve them?

Yes, they do.

And the senators?¹

Yes, the senators improve them.

But perhaps the members of the assembly corrupt them?—
or do they too improve them?

They improve them.

Then every Athenian improves and elevates them; all with
the exception of myself; and I alone am their corrupter? Is
that what you affirm?

That is what I stoutly affirm.

I am very unfortunate if you are right. But suppose I ask you
a question: How about horses? Does one man do them harm
and all the world good? Is not the exact opposite the truth?
One man is able to do them good, or at least not many;—the
trainer of horses, that is to say, does them good, and others
who have to do with them rather injure them? Is not that
true, Meletus, of horses, or of any other animals? Most
assuredly it is; whether you and Anytus say yes or no. Happy
indeed would be the condition of youth if they had one
corrupter only, and all the rest of the world were their im-
provers. But you, Meletus, have sufficiently shown that you
never had a thought about the young: your carelessness is

¹ Members of the Council of Five Hundred (see p. 30). Every Athenian citizen was a member of the assembly, the sovereign political body in Athens.

seen in your not caring about the very things which you bring against me.

13. AND now, Meletus, I will ask you another question—by Zeus I will: Is it better to live among bad citizens, or among good ones? Answer, friend, I say; the question is one which may be easily answered. Do not the good do their neighbours good, and the bad do them evil?

Certainly.

And is there any one who would rather be injured than benefited by those who live with him? Answer, my good friend, the law requires you to answer—does any one like to be injured?

Certainly not.

And when you accuse me of corrupting and deteriorating the youth, do you allege that I corrupt them intentionally or unintentionally?

Intentionally, I say.

But you have just admitted that the good do their neighbours good, and the evil do them evil. Now, is that a truth which your superior wisdom has recognized thus early in life, and am I, at my age, in such darkness and ignorance as not to know that if a man with whom I have to live is corrupted by me, I am very likely to be harmed by him; and yet I corrupt him, and intentionally, too—so you say, although neither I nor any other human being is ever likely to be convinced by you. But either I do not corrupt them, or I corrupt them unintentionally; and on either view of the case you lie. If my offence is unintentional, the law has no cognizance of unintentional offences: you ought to have taken me privately, and warned and admonished me; for if I had been better advised, I should have left off doing what I only did unintentionally—no doubt I should; but you would have nothing to say to me and refused to teach me. And now you bring me up in this court, which is a place not of instruction, but of punishment.

14. Note (a) the light thrown in this chapter on the religious orthodoxy of the ordinary Athenian; (b) that, in the opinion of Meletus, the way in which Socrates injured the young was by making them atheists; (c) that the 'atheism' was the result of his supposed scientific views. Actually the views attributed to him are not his own, but those of the Ionian cosmologist Anaxagoras, who gave a physical explanation of the heavenly bodies; (d) the price of a book in Athens—in this case about 4s. 6d. in our money. They were copied by educated slaves. The 'Orchestra' where they were sold was in the Market.

It will be very clear to you, Athenians, as I was saying, that Meletus has no care at all, great or small, about the matter. But still I should like to know, Meletus, in what I am affirmed to corrupt the young. I suppose you mean, as I infer from your indictment, that I teach them not to acknowledge the gods which the state acknowledges, but some other new divinities or spiritual agencies in their stead. These are the lessons by which I corrupt the youth, as you say.

Yes, that I say emphatically.

Then, by the gods, Meletus, of whom we are speaking, tell me and the court, in somewhat plainer terms, what you mean! For I do not as yet understand whether you affirm that I teach other men to acknowledge some gods, and therefore that I do believe in gods, and am not an entire atheist—this you do not lay to my charge—but only you say that they are not the same gods which the city recognizes; the charge is that they are different gods. Or, do you mean that I am an atheist simply, and a teacher of atheism?

I mean the latter—that you are a complete atheist.

What an extraordinary statement! Why do you think so, Meletus? Do you mean that I do not believe in the godhead of the sun or moon, like other men?

I assure you, men of the jury, that he does not: for he says that the sun is stone, and the moon earth.

Friend Meletus, you think that you are accusing Anaxagoras: and you have but a bad opinion of the jury, if you fancy them illiterate to such a degree as not to know that these doctrines are found in the books of Anaxagoras the Clazomenian, which are full of them. And so, forsooth, the youth are said to be taught them by Socrates, when they can buy them in the Orchestra for a drachma at most, and laugh at Socrates if he pretends to father these very unusual views. And so, Meletus, you really think that I do not believe in any god?

I swear by Zeus that you believe absolutely in none at all.

Nobody will believe you, Meletus, and I am pretty sure that you do not believe yourself. I cannot help thinking, men of Athens, that Meletus is reckless and impudent, and that he has brought this indictment in a spirit of mere wantonness and youthful bravado. Has he not compounded a riddle, thinking ²⁷ to try me? He said to himself:—I shall see whether the wise Socrates will discover my facetious contradiction, or whether I shall be able to deceive him and the rest of them. For he certainly does appear to me to contradict himself in the indictment as much as if he said that Socrates is guilty of not believing in the gods, and yet of believing in them—but this is not like a person who is in earnest.

15. I SHOULD like you, Athenians, to join me in examining what I conceive to be his meaning; and do you, Meletus, answer. And I must remind the audience of my request that they would not make a disturbance if I speak in my accustomed manner:

Did ever man, Meletus, believe in the existence of human things, and not of human beings? (*Protest from Meletus.*) I wish, men of Athens, that he would answer, and not make these repeated interruptions. Did ever any man believe in horsemanship, and not in horses? or in flute-playing, and not

in flute-players? No, my friend; I will answer to you and to the court, as you refuse to answer for yourself. There is no man who ever did. But now please to answer the next question: Can a man believe in divine forces, and not in divine beings?

He cannot.

How lucky I am to have extracted that answer, by the assistance of the court! But then you swear in the indictment that I teach and believe in divine forces (new or old, no matter for that); at any rate, I believe in divine forces—so you say and swear in the affidavit; and yet if I believe in divine forces, how can I help believing in divine beings—must I not? To be sure I must; and therefore I may assume that your silence gives consent. Now what are divine beings—are they not either gods or the sons of gods?

Certainly they are.

But this is what I call the facetious riddle invented by you: the divine beings are gods, and you say first that I do not believe in gods, and then again that I do believe in gods; that is, if I believe in divine beings.¹ For if the divine beings are the illegitimate sons of gods, whether by the nymphs or by any other mothers, of whom they are said to be the sons—what human being will ever believe that there are no gods if they are the sons of gods? You might as well affirm the existence of mules, and deny that of horses and asses. Such nonsense, Meletus, could only have been intended by you to make trial of us. You have put this into the indictment because you had nothing real of which to accuse me. But no one who has a particle of understanding will ever be convinced by you that the same men can believe in divine and superhuman things, and yet not believe that there are gods and divine beings and
28 heroes.

¹ In ordinary Greek *θεός* (god) and *δαίμων* (here translated 'divine being') are often used without distinction. S. confines the latter to mythological beings like Heracles who were supposed to have a human and a divine parent.

16. *Dropping dialectic, S. proceeds to his real defence. He is replying less to Meletus than to a friendly opponent who says 'Is it worth while running counter to public opinion and risking death?', and he explains why this risk does not deter him, supporting his view by an appeal to the great national poet. It is not a logical argument, but the statement of a faith, a martyr's apology for the acts that lead to his martyrdom.*

I HAVE said enough in answer to the charge of Meletus: any elaborate defence is unnecessary; but be assured that, as I said earlier, I made many bitter enemies, and this is what will be my destruction if I am destroyed—not Meletus, nor yet Anytus, but the envy and detraction of the world, which has been the death of many good men, and will probably be the death of many more; there is no danger of my being the last of them.

Some one will say: And are you not ashamed, Socrates, of a course of life which is likely to bring you to an untimely end? To him I may fairly answer: There you are mistaken: a man who is good for anything ought not to calculate the chance of living or dying; he ought only to consider whether in doing anything he is doing right or wrong—acting the part of a good man or of a bad. Whereas, upon your view, the heroes who fell at Troy were not good for much, and the son of Thetis¹ above all, who altogether despised danger in comparison with disgrace; and when he was so eager to slay Hector, his goddess

¹ Achilles, who might have escaped death if he had renounced vengeance on his friend's slayer, Hector. S. here (as above, p. 22) accepts the primitive morality of legend, of which in the *Republic* (books 2 and 3) he demands the expurgation.

mother said to him, that if he avenged his companion Patroclus, and slew Hector, he would die himself—'Fate,' she said, in these or the like words, 'waits for you next after Hector'; he, receiving this warning, utterly despised danger and death, and instead of fearing them, feared rather to live in dishonour and not to avenge his friend. 'Let me die forthwith', he replies, 'and be avenged of my enemy, rather than abide here by the beaked ships, a laughing-stock and a burden of the earth.' Had Achilles any thought of death and danger? Wherever a man's place is, whether the place which he has chosen or that in which he has been placed by his commander, there he ought to remain in the hour of danger; he should not think of death or of anything but of disgrace. And this, men of Athens, is a true saying.

17. *In reading this chapter, where S. alludes to the religious motive in his life, we should remember that Meletus has described him as an atheist. It is the familiar phenomenon of a man attacked, sincerely, for irreligion, who is more religious than his opponents. Note (a) S.'s intense mystical faith in an ultimate spiritual force, (b) his summary of his teaching.*

STRANGE, indeed, would be my conduct, men of Athens, if I who, when I was ordered by the generals whom you chose to command me at Potidaea and Amphipolis and Delium,¹ remained where they placed me, like any other man, facing death—if now, when,

¹ The allusion is to campaigns in which S. had served in his younger days and shows another side of him. The *Symposium* describes episodes in connexion with two of them (219 ff.).

as I conceive and imagine, God orders me to fulfil the philosopher's mission of searching into myself and other men, I were to desert my post through²⁹ fear of death, or any other fear; that would indeed be strange, and I might justly be arraigned in court for denying the existence of the gods, if I disobeyed the oracle because I was afraid of death, fancying that I was wise when I was not wise. For the fear of death is indeed the pretence of wisdom, and not real wisdom, being a pretence of knowing the unknown; and no one knows whether death, which men in their fear apprehend to be the greatest evil, may not be the greatest good. Is not this ignorance of a disgraceful sort, the ignorance which is the conceit that a man knows what he does not know? And in this respect only I believe myself to differ from men in general, and may perhaps claim to be wiser than they are:—that whereas I know but little of the next world, I do not suppose that I know: but I do know that injustice and disobedience to a better, whether God or man, is evil and ugly, and I will never fear or fly what for all I know may be good rather than what I am certain is evil. And therefore if you let me go now, and are not convinced by Anytus, who said that since I had been prosecuted I must be put to death; (or if not, that I ought never to have been prosecuted at all); and that if I escape now, your sons will all be utterly ruined by listening to my words—if you say to me, Socrates, this time we will not mind Anytus, and you shall be let off, but upon one condition, that you are not to inquire and speculate in this way any more, and that if you are caught doing so again you shall die;—if this was the condition on which you let me go, I

should reply: Men of Athens, I have the warmest affection for you; but I shall obey God rather than you, and while I have life and strength I shall never cease from the practice and teaching of philosophy, exhorting any one whom I meet and saying to him after my manner: You, my friend—a citizen of the great and mighty and wise city of Athens—are you not ashamed of devoting yourself to acquiring the greatest amount of money and honour and reputation, and caring so little about wisdom and truth and the greatest improvement of the soul, which you never regard or heed at all? And if the person with whom I am arguing says: Yes, but I do care; then I do not leave him or let him go at once; but I proceed to interrogate and examine and cross-examine him, and if I think that he has no ‘virtue’ in him, but only says that he has, I reproach him with undervaluing the
 30 greater, and overvaluing the less. And this I shall do to every one whom I meet, young and old, citizen and alien, but especially to the citizens, inasmuch as they are my brethren. For know that this is the command of God; and I believe that no greater good has ever happened in the state than my service to God. For I do nothing but go about persuading you all, old and young alike, not to take thought for your persons or your properties, but first and chiefly to care about the greatest improvement of the soul. I tell you that ‘virtue’ is not given by money, but that from ‘virtue’ comes money and every other good of man, public as well as private.¹ This is my teaching,

¹ There is a parallel (but also a difference) in Matthew vi. 33: ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’

and if this is the doctrine which corrupts the youth, I am a mischievous person. But if any one says that this is not my teaching, he is speaking an untruth. And so, men of Athens, I say to you, do as Anytus bids or not as Anytus bids, and either acquit me or not; but whichever you do, understand that I shall never alter my ways, not even if I have to die many times. (*Protests in court.*)

18. *To Anytus's picture of him as a public nuisance, S. proceeds to oppose a picture of himself as a public benefit, indicating the uses of a prophet or critic in a community.*

MEN of Athens, do not interrupt, but hear me; there was an understanding between us that you should hear me to the end: I have something more to say, at which you may be inclined to cry out; but I believe that to hear me will be good for you, and therefore I beg that you will not cry out. I would have you know that if you kill such a one as I am, you will injure yourselves more than you will injure me. Nothing will injure me, not Meletus nor yet Anytus—they cannot, for a bad man is not permitted to injure a better than himself. I do not deny that Anytus may, perhaps, kill him, or drive him into exile, or deprive him of civil rights; and he may imagine, and others may imagine, that he is inflicting a great injury upon him: but there I do not agree. For the evil of doing as he is doing—the evil of unjustly taking away the life of another—is greater far.

And now, Athenians, I am not going to argue for my own sake, as you may think, but for yours, that you may not sin against the God by condemning me, who am his gift to you. For if you kill me you will

not easily find a successor to me, who, if I may use such a ludicrous figure of speech, am a sort of gadfly, attached to the state by God; and the state is a great and noble horse who is rather sluggish owing to his very size, and requires to be stirred into life. I am that gadfly which God has attached to the state, and
 31 all day long and in all places am always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading and reproaching you. You will not easily find another like me, and therefore I would advise you to spare me. I dare say that you may feel out of temper (like a person who is suddenly awakened from sleep), and you think that you might easily strike me dead as Anytus advises, and then you would sleep on for the remainder of your lives, unless God in his care of you sent you another gadfly. When I say that I am given to you by God, the proof of my mission is this:—if I had been like other men, I should not have neglected all my own concerns or patiently seen the neglect of them during all these years, and have been doing yours, coming to you individually like a father or elder brother, exhorting you to regard ‘virtue’; such conduct, I say, would be unlike human nature. If I had gained anything, or had been paid for my exhortations, it would have been intelligible; but now, as you will perceive, not even the impudence of my accusers dares to say that I have ever exacted or sought pay of any one; of that they have produced no witness. And I have a sufficient witness to the truth of what I say—my poverty.

19. *‘If S. was so anxious to improve Athens, why did he not go into politics?’ In reply to this criticism S. explains*

with two illustrations, why he avoided politics. (Perhaps he is not quite fair to his countrymen: there are better reasons why a prophet's work cannot be done in active political life.) But, though never a politician, S. never shirked any of the public duties of a citizen either military or political (as the Apology shows, pp. 24 and 30 f.).

SOME one may wonder why I go about in private giving advice and busying myself with the concerns of others, but do not venture to come forward in public and advise the state. I will tell you why. You have heard me speak at many times and places of a divine sign from God which comes to me, and which, I suppose, is the divinity that Meletus attacked and ridiculed in the indictment.¹ This sign, which is a kind of voice, first began to come to me when I was a child; it always forbids but never commands me to do anything which I am going to do. This is what deters me from being a politician. And rightly, as I think. For I am certain, men of Athens, that if I had engaged in politics, I should have perished long ago, and done no good either to you or to myself. And do not be offended at my telling you the truth: for the truth is, that no man who opposes you or any other crowd and tries to prevent the many unjust and illegal acts which are done in the state, will save his ³² life; he who will fight for the right, if he would live even for a brief space, must have a private station and not a public one.

¹ Allusions elsewhere to this 'sign' add nothing substantial to the description of it here. The peculiar feature of this divine voice, which is an unexplained psychological phenomenon, related perhaps to the mystical element in S., was that it was always negative, telling him *not* to do something. This shows that it was not what we call conscience.

20. *This chapter describes two occasions when, through no wish of his own, S. played a part in politics. On the first occasion he was a member of the Boulé or Council of Five Hundred which prepared the business for the sovereign Assembly and gave effect to its decisions. This Council was formed by choosing by lot fifty men from each of the ten Athenian tribes; the lot fell on S., and he had no choice but to serve. Each fifty acted in turn as a standing committee of the whole, being called Prytaneis or Presidents. In 406 the Athenian fleet defeated the Spartans at Arginusae ('the Bright Islands'), but after the victory failed to retrieve its damaged ships, of which a number were sunk in a storm with great loss of life. The indignation in Athens was great, and the admirals who had returned were put on trial en bloc, condemned, and executed. S.'s tribe happened to be presiding on the occasion. His 49 colleagues bowed to the popular storm and raised no protest against the illegality of the trial en bloc.*

S.'s second intervention into politics was equally involuntary. It took place two years later when the oligarchs had seized power and were treating their opponents in a way with which post-War events on the Continent have made us familiar. The 'Rotunda' was the building appropriated to the use of the Prytaneis which the oligarchs had seized.

I CAN give you convincing evidence of what I say, not words only, but what you value far more—actions. Let me relate to you a passage of my own life which will prove to you that I should never have yielded to injustice from any fear of death, and that as I should have refused to yield I must have died at once. I will

tell you a tale of the courts, not very interesting perhaps, but nevertheless true. The only office of state which I ever held, men of Athens, was that of senator: the tribe Antiochis, which is my tribe, had the presidency at the trial of the generals who had not taken up¹ the bodies of the slain after the battle of Arginusae; and you proposed to try them in a body, contrary to law, as you all thought afterwards; but at the time I was the only one of the Prytaneis who was opposed to the illegality, and I gave my vote against it; and when the orators threatened to impeach and arrest me, and you shouted and told them to do it, I made up my mind that I would run the risk, having law and justice with me, rather than take part in your injustice from any fear of imprisonment and death. This happened in the days of the democracy. But when the oligarchy of the Thirty was in power, they sent for me and four others into the Rotunda, and bade us bring Leon the Salaminian from Salamis, as they wanted to put him to death. This was a specimen of the sort of commands which they were always giving with the view of implicating as many as possible in their crimes; and then I showed, not in word only but in deed, that, if I may be allowed to use such an expression, I cared not a straw for death, and that my great and only care was lest I should do an unrighteous or unholy thing. For the strong arm of that oppressive power did not frighten me into doing wrong; and when we came out of the Rotunda the other four went to Salamis and fetched Leon, but I went quietly home. For which I might have lost my

¹ For a Greek to remain unburied meant that he could not enter the underworld.

life, had not the power of the Thirty shortly afterwards come to an end. And many will witness to my words.

21. Now do you really imagine that I could have survived all these years, if I had led a public life, supposing that like a good man I had always maintained the right and had made it, as I ought, my first consideration? No indeed, men of Athens, neither I
 33 nor any other man. But I have been always the same in all my actions, public as well as private, and never have I yielded any base compliance to those who are slanderously termed my disciples,¹ or to any other. Not that I have any regular disciples. But if any one likes to come and hear me while I am pursuing my mission, whether he be young or old, he is not excluded. Nor do I converse only with those who pay; but any one, whether he be rich or poor, may ask and answer me and listen to my reply; and whether he turns out to be a bad man or a good one, neither result can be justly imputed to me; for I never taught or professed to teach him anything. And if any one says that he has ever learnt or heard anything from me in private which all the world has not heard, let me tell you that he is lying.

22. *By appealing to the testimony of his pupils and their relations, S. replies to the vague charge that he corrupted the youth.*

BUT I shall be asked, Why do people delight in spending so much time with you? I have told you already, Athenians, the whole truth about this matter:

¹ He means Alcibiades and Critias (see p. xxvi).

they like to hear the cross-examination of those who think themselves wise and are not; there is amusement in it. Now this duty of cross-examining other men has been imposed upon me by God;¹ and has been signified to me by oracles, visions, and in every way in which the will of divine power was ever intimated to any one. This is true, Athenians, and easy to test. If I am or have been corrupting the youth, those of them who are now grown up and have realized that I ever gave them any bad advice in the days of their youth should come forward as accusers, and take their revenge; or if they do not like to come themselves, some of their relatives, fathers, brothers, or other kinsmen, should say what harm their families have suffered at my hands. Now is their time. Many of them I see in the court. There is Crito, who is of the same age and of the same deme with myself, and there is Critobulus his son, whom I also see. Then again there is Lysanias of Sphettus, who is the father of Aeschines—he is present; and also there is Antiphon of Cephissus, who is the father of Epigenes; and there are the brothers of several who have associated with me. There is Nicostratus the son of Theozotides, and the brother of Theodotus (now Theodotus himself is dead, and therefore he, at any rate, will not seek to stop him); and there is Paralus the son of Demodocus, who had a brother Theages; and Adeimantus the son of Ariston, whose brother Plato² is 34

¹ The phrase recalls the words in which the prophets announce their mission ('The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, Speak unto the men of Judah . . .', Jeremiah xi. 1). But the calm cross-examination of the Greek is very unlike the fiery denunciation of the Jew.

² Plato himself was therefore in court. For Crito see the dialogue that bears his name.

present; and Aeantodorus, who is the brother of Apollodorus, whom I also see. I might mention a great many others, some of whom Meletus should have produced as witnesses, preferably in the course of his speech; but let him still produce them, if he forgot then—I will make way for him. And let him say, if he has any testimony of the sort which he can produce. Nay, Athenians, the very opposite is the truth. For all these are ready to witness on behalf of the corrupter, of the injurer of their kindred, as Meletus and Anytus call me; not the corrupted youth only—their help might have been explicable—but their uncorrupted elder relatives. Why should they too support me with their testimony? Why, indeed, except for the sake of truth and justice, and because they know that I am speaking the truth, and that Meletus is not.

23. S. ends his speech by explaining why he is not following the practice, usual at Athens, by which defendants brought their family into court in order to appeal to the feelings of the jury. Note his peroration.

WELL, Athenians, this and the like of this is all the defence which I have to offer. Yet a word more. Perhaps there may be some one who is offended at me, when he calls to mind how he himself on a similar, or even a less serious occasion, prayed and entreated the jury with many tears, and how he produced his children in court, in order to excite as much pity as possible, together with a host of relations and friends; whereas I, who am probably in danger of my life, will do none of these things. The

contrast may occur to his mind, and he may be set against me, and vote in anger because he is displeased at me on this account. Now if there be such a person among you—mind, I do not say that there is—to him I may fairly reply: My friend, I am a man, and like other men, a creature of flesh and blood, and not ‘of wood or stone’, as Homer says; and I have a family, yes, and sons, Athenians, three in number, one almost a man, and two others who are still young; and yet I will not bring any of them hither in order to petition you for an acquittal. And why not? Not from wilfulness or want of respect for you. Whether I am or am not afraid of death is another question, of which I will not now speak. But, having regard to public opinion, I feel that such conduct would be discreditable to myself, and to you, and to the whole state. One who has reached my years, and who has a name for wisdom, ought not to demean himself. Whether this opinion of me be deserved or not, at any rate the world has decided that Socrates is in some way superior to other men. And if those among 35 you who are said to be superior in wisdom and courage, and any other virtue, demean themselves in this way, how shameful is their conduct! I have seen men of reputation, when they have been condemned, behaving in the strangest manner: they seemed to fancy that they were going to suffer something dreadful if they died, and that they could be immortal if you only allowed them to live; I think that such men disgrace the state, and that any stranger coming in would have said of them that the most eminent men of Athens, whom the Athenians themselves select out of their number for office and other honours, are

no better than women. And I say that these things ought not to be done by those of us who have a reputation; and if they are done, you ought not to permit them; you ought rather to show that you are far more disposed to condemn the man who gets up these doleful displays and makes the city ridiculous, than him who holds his peace.

24. BUT, setting aside the question of the reputation of Athens, there seems to be something wrong in asking a favour of a jurymen, and thus procuring an acquittal, instead of informing and convincing him. For he sits here, not to make a favour of justice, but to give judgement; and he has sworn that he will judge according to the laws, and not according to his own good pleasure; and we ought not to accustom you, nor should you allow yourselves to be accustomed, to perjury—there can be no piety in that. Do not then require me to do what I consider dishonourable and impious and wrong, especially now, when I am being tried for impiety on the indictment of Meletus. For if by force of persuasion and entreaty I could overpower your oaths, then I should be teaching you to believe that there are no gods, and my defence would simply convict me of the charge of not believing in them. But that is not so—far otherwise. For I do believe that there are gods, and in a sense higher than that in which any of my accusers believe in them. And to you and to God I commit my cause, to be determined by you as is best for you and me.

The jury, by 280 votes to 220, bring in a verdict of Guilty.

25. *After so uncompromising a speech the verdict of sixty votes by which S. was condemned is surprisingly small. By the custom of the Athenian courts the defendant had the right to propose an alternative penalty to that for which the prosecutor asked. S.'s counter-proposal has an element of 'irony', but imprudent as it was and arrogant as it sounds, it is in keeping with his uncompromising frankness and honesty. That is what he believed himself to deserve, and, when it is seen in the perspective of time, who would deny the justice of this ironical proposal? The court was naturally annoyed, and the verdict of death was brought in by an increased majority.*

Note the description of his life (p. 38) and the age-old contrast between the older and the younger generation (p. 40).

THERE are many reasons why I am not grieved, men ³⁶ of Athens, at the vote of condemnation. I expected it, and am only surprised that the votes are so nearly equal; for I had thought that the majority against me would have been far larger; but now, had thirty votes gone over to the other side, I should have been acquitted. And I may say, I think, that I have escaped Meletus. I may say more; for without the assistance of Anytus and Lycon, any one may see that he would not have had a fifth part of the votes, as the law requires, in which case he would have incurred a fine of a thousand drachmae.¹

¹ The assumption is that each of the three accusers were responsible for one-third of the 280 votes cast against S.; hence Meletus, the chief prosecutor, would have had to pay the fine imposed on those who failed to get one-fifth of the total number of votes cast (500 in this case).

26. AND so he proposes death as the penalty. And what shall I propose on my part, men of Athens? Clearly that which is my due. And what is my due? What penalty or fine is due from me because I would not lead a quiet life, but have been careless of what the crowd care for—wealth, and family interests, and military office, and a political career, and the rest—magistracies, and caucuses, and parties. Reflecting that I was really too honest a man to be a politician and live, I did not go where I could do no good to you or to myself; but where I could do the greatest good privately to every one of you, thither I went, and sought to persuade every man among you that he must look to himself, and seek ‘virtue’ and wisdom before he looks to his private interests, and care more for Athens than he cares for the affairs of Athens; and that this should be the order which he observes in all his actions. What shall be done to me if that is the sort of person I am? Doubtless some good thing, men of Athens, if the penalty proposed is really to match my deserts; and the good should be of a kind suitable to me. What would be a reward suitable to a poor man who is your benefactor, and who desires leisure that he may instruct you? There can be no reward so fitting as maintenance in the Prytaneum,¹ men of Athens, a reward which he deserves far more than the citizen who has won the prize at Olympia in the horse or chariot race, whether the chariots

¹ The Prytaneum, where the Prytaneis (p. 30) sat during their term of office, was, as it were, the Guildhall of the Greek city state. The right to dine there at public expense (which S. here suggests should be offered to him) was given to citizens and foreigners who had brought honour or done distinguished service to the state; in this was reckoned a victory at the Olympic games, as bringing credit to the victor's country.

were drawn by two horses or by many. For I am in want, and he has enough; and he only gives you the appearance of happiness, and I give you the reality. And if I am to propose a penalty based on my deserts, I should say that maintenance in the Prytaneum is 37 the just return.

27. PERHAPS you think that I am braving you in what I am saying now, as in what I said before about the tears and prayers. But this is not so. I speak rather because I am convinced that I never intentionally wronged any one, although I cannot convince you—the time has been too short; if there were a law at Athens, as there is in other cities, that a capital cause should not be decided in one day, then I believe that I should have convinced you. But I cannot in a moment refute great slanders; and, as I am convinced that I never wronged another, I will assuredly not wrong myself. I will not say of myself that I deserve any evil, or propose any penalty. Why should I? Because I am afraid of the penalty of death which Meletus proposes? When I do not know whether death is a good or an evil, why should I propose a penalty which would certainly be an evil? Shall I say imprisonment? And why should I live in prison, and be the slave of the magistrates of the year—of the Eleven?¹ Or shall the penalty be a fine, and imprisonment until the fine is paid? There is the same objection. I should have to lie in prison, for money I have none, and cannot pay. And if I say exile (and this may possibly be the penalty which you will affix), I must indeed be blinded by the love of

¹ A committee which had charge of the prisons.

life, if I am so irrational as to expect that when you, who are my own citizens, cannot endure my discourses and words, and have found them so grievous and odious that you will have no more of them; others are likely to endure me. No indeed, men of Athens, that is not very likely. And what a life should I lead, at my age, wandering from city to city, ever changing my place of exile, and always being driven out! For I am quite sure that wherever I go, there, as here, the young men will flock to me; and if I drive them away, their elders will drive me out at their request; and if I let them come, their fathers and friends will drive me out for their sakes.

28. SOME one will say: Yes, Socrates, but cannot you hold your tongue, and then you may go abroad, and no one will interfere with you? Now I have great difficulty in making you understand my answer to this. For if I tell you that to do as you say would be a disobedience to the God, and therefore that I cannot hold my tongue, you will not believe that I am serious; 38 and if I say again that daily to discourse about 'virtue', and of those other things about which you hear me examining myself and others, is the greatest good of man, and that the unexamined life is not worth living,¹ you are still less likely to believe me. Yet I say what is true, although a thing of which it is hard for me to persuade you. Also, I have never been accustomed to think that I deserve to suffer any harm. Had I money I might have estimated the offence at what I was able to pay, and not have been much the

¹ The first part of this creed is the common coin of moralists; but few men desire the 'criticized life', which is so characteristic of the Socratic ideal.

worse. But I have none, and therefore I must ask you to proportion the fine to my means. Well, perhaps I could afford a mina, and therefore I propose that penalty: Plato, Crito, Critobulus, and Apollodorus, my friends here, bid me say thirty minae,¹ and they will be the sureties. Let thirty minae be the penalty; for which sum they will be ample security to you.

The jury vote for the sentence of death.

29. *The final address to the jury is generally regarded as an invention of Plato, on the grounds that juries do not listen to long discourses by defendants whom they have sentenced. Yet it appears also in Xenophon's account of the trial. It falls into two parts, the first addressed to those who had voted for the condemnation. S.'s words are free from bitterness, though there is no trace of any spirit of Christian forgiveness towards his accusers: he is neither angry with them nor can he excuse their injustice, which he reviews objectively, impartially, in a strictly rational way.*

In the second part, addressed to those who had voted for his acquittal, we have the meditations of a condemned man on death, and on a future life. With his conception of it contrast those in the Paradiso of Dante or in Revelation xxi and xxii. To the writer of Revelation, the climax of the New Jerusalem is that 'the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him; and they shall see his face'. To S. the next world is a mere continuation of this one, and its pleasures will be the opportunity of talking with men, the wise and the good, and pursuing the quest of knowledge.

¹ Perhaps £800 in our money.

Those whom he hopes especially to meet are the righteous judges of the underworld, the poets (among whom Orpheus and Musæus are legendary), famous victims of injustice, and great figures of legend and history. For S. the pleasure of talking to the latter will be to discover if they are really wise, and no doubt they would suffer at his hands in the next world the fate which befell the politicians of Athens in this one. God finds no place in his underworld, and though, as the close of the dialogue shows, S.'s outlook is determined by religion, it never occurs to him that the Divine Vision might be the highest joy of a future life. In so far as he lacks the imaginative power of the Apocalypse: 'the city had no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it' (xvi. 23).

It should, however, be noticed that in the Phædo the attitude of S. to a future life is different. Here he considers it almost in an agnostic mood, leaving undecided the question whether death is an unbroken sleep or the door to another world. There, though not without a touch of uncertainty, he accepts the proof of immortality, and looks forward to a world where 'men hear the voices of the gods, and hold converse with them'.¹ Clearly this is a different outlook from the close of the Apology. We may explain the difference by saying either that in the Phædo we have the opinions of Plato and here those of S., or that in the Apology, speaking to a mixed audience, S. could not expound his intimate beliefs and left the question of immortality open.²

¹ p. 187.

² See discussion, Burnet, *Phædo*, xlviii f. Of course the speaker is S. both in the *Apology* and in the *Phædo*. But the *Apology*, which is the account of an actual speech, is more likely to contain the opinions of the historic S. In the *Crito* too a future life is assumed, p. 69.

Not much time will be gained, Athenians, in return for the evil name which you will get from the detractors of the city, who will say that you killed Socrates, a wise man; for they will call me wise, even although I am not wise, when they want to reproach you. If you had waited a little while, your desire would have been fulfilled in the course of nature. For I am far advanced in years, as you may perceive, and not far from death. I am speaking now not to all of you, but only to those who have condemned me to death. And I have another thing to say to them: You think that I was convicted because I had no words of the sort which would have procured my acquittal—I mean, if I had thought fit to leave nothing undone or unsaid. Not so; the deficiency which led to my conviction was not of words—certainly not. But I had not the boldness or impudence or inclination to address you as you would have liked me to do, weeping and wailing and lamenting, and saying and doing many things which you have been accustomed to hear from others, and which, as I maintain, are unworthy of me. I thought at the time that I ought not to do anything common or mean when in danger: nor do I now repent of the style of my defence; I would rather die having spoken after my manner, than speak in your manner and live. For neither in war nor yet at law ought I or any man to use every way of escaping death. Often in battle 39 there can be no doubt that if a man will throw away his arms, and fall on his knees before his pursuers, he may escape death; and in other dangers there are other ways of escaping death, if a man is willing to say and do anything. The difficulty, my friends, is

not to avoid death, but to avoid unrighteousness; for that runs faster than death. I am old and move slowly, and the slower runner has overtaken me, and my accusers are keen and quick, and the faster runner, who is unrighteousness, has overtaken them. And now I depart hence condemned by you to suffer the penalty of death—they too go their ways condemned by the truth to suffer the penalty of wickedness and wrong; and I must abide by my award—let them abide by theirs. I suppose that these things may be regarded as fated—and I think that they are well.

30. AND now, you who have condemned me, I would fain prophesy to you; for I am about to die, and in the hour of death men are gifted with prophetic power. And I prophesy to you who have sentenced me to death, that immediately after my departure punishment far heavier than you have inflicted on me will surely await you. Me you have killed because you wanted to escape the accuser, and not to give an account of your lives. But that will not be as you suppose: far otherwise. For I say that there will be more accusers of you than there are now; accusers whom hitherto I have restrained: and as they are younger they will be more inconsiderate with you, and you will be more offended at them. If you think that by killing men you can prevent some one from censuring you for living wrongly, you are mistaken; that is not a way of escape which is either possible or honourable; the easiest and the noblest way is not to be disabling others, but to be improving yourselves. This is the prophecy which I utter before my departure to the judges who have condemned me.

31. FRIENDS, who would have acquitted me, I would like also to talk with you about what has happened, while the magistrates are busy, and before I go to the place at which I must die. Stay then a little, for we may as well talk with one another while there is time. You are my friends, and I should like to show you ⁴⁰ the meaning of this event which has happened to me. My judges—for you I may truly call judges—I should like to tell you of a wonderful circumstance. Hitherto the divine faculty¹ of which the internal oracle is the source has constantly been in the habit of opposing me even about trifles, if I was going to make a slip or error in any matter; and now as you see there has come upon me that which may be thought, and is generally believed to be, the last and worst evil. But the oracle made no sign of opposition, either when I was leaving my house in the morning, or when I was on my way to the court, or while I was speaking, at anything which I was going to say; and yet I have often been stopped in the middle of a speech, but now in nothing I either said or did touching the matter in hand has the oracle opposed me. What do I take to be the explanation of this silence? I will tell you. It is an intimation that what has happened to me is a good, and that those of us who think that death is an evil are in error. For the customary sign would surely have opposed me had I been going to evil and not to good.

32. LET us reflect in another way, and we shall see that there is great reason to hope that death is a good.

¹ See p. 29 n.

There are two alternatives—either death is a state of nothingness and utter unconsciousness, or, as men say, there is a migration of the soul from this world to another. Now if you suppose that there is no consciousness, but a sleep like the sleep of him who is undisturbed even by dreams, death will be an unspeakable gain. If a person were to select the night in which his sleep was undisturbed even by dreams, and were to compare with this the other days and nights of his life, and then were to tell us how many days and nights he had passed in the course of his life better and more pleasantly than this one, I think that any man, I will not say a private man, but even the King of Persia¹ will not find many such days or nights, when compared with the others. Now if death be of such a nature, I say that to die is gain; for eternity is then only a single night. But if death is the journey to another place, and there, as men say, all the dead abide, what good, my friends and judges, can be greater than this? If indeed when the pilgrim
¶ arrives in the world below, he is delivered from the professors of justice in this world, and finds the true judges who are said to give judgement there, Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus and Triptolemus, and other sons of God who were righteous in their own life, that pilgrimage will be worth making. What would not a man give if he might converse with Orpheus and Musaeus and Hesiod and Homer? Nay, if this be true, let me die again and again. I myself, too, shall have a wonderful interest in there meeting and conversing with Palamedes, and Ajax

¹ To a Greek the King of Persia was the type of worldly wealth and greatness.

the son of Telamon,¹ and any other ancient hero who has suffered death through an unjust judgement; and there will be no small pleasure, as I think, in comparing my own sufferings with theirs. Above all, I shall then be able to continue my search into true and false knowledge; as in this world, so also in the next; and I shall find out who is wise, and who pretends to be wise, and is not. What would not a man give to be able to examine the leader of the great Trojan expedition; or Odysseus or Sisyphus, or numberless others, men and women too! What infinite delight would there be in conversing with them and asking them questions! In another world they do not put a man to death for asking questions: assuredly not. For besides being happier than we are, they will be immortal, if what is said is true.

33. So, my judges, face death with a good hope, and know for certain that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death. He and his are not neglected by the gods; nor has my own approaching end happened by mere chance. I see clearly that the time had arrived when it was better for me to die and be released from trouble; and so the oracle gave no sign. For this reason, also, I am not angry with my condemners, or with my accusers; they have done me no harm, although they did not mean to do me any good; and for this I may gently blame them.

Still I have a favour to ask of them. When my

¹ Palamedes was put to death on a false charge of treachery: Ajax was unjustly deprived of the arms of Achilles, when these, which were to pass after their owner's death to the bravest Greek, were awarded to Odysseus instead of to Ajax. Odysseus and Sisyphus are examples of wisdom and cunning.

sons are grown up, I would ask you, my friends, to punish them, and I would have you trouble them, as I have troubled you, if they seem to care about riches, or anything, more than about 'virtue'; or if they pretend to be something when they are really nothing—then reprove them, as I have reproved you, for not caring about that for which they ought to care, and thinking that they are something when they are really
42 nothing. And if you do this, both I and my sons will have received justice at your hands.

The hour of departure has arrived, and we go our ways—I to die, and you to live. Which is better is known to God and only to him.

CRITO

INTRODUCTION

IN the *Apology* Socrates is in conflict with his countrymen, and we might gain the impression that he was a great personality, a prophet and martyr, but that, if not a bad citizen, he was indifferent to the state and its claims. The effect and object of the *Crito* is to correct such an impression. In it Socrates is offered an easy opportunity to escape from prison; even his opponents, who merely wished to silence him, would not have resented his flight, and the only objection is that by escaping he would be breaking the law. Thus the dialogue exhibits Socrates as a citizen and gives his ideas of a man's duty to his state.

The place is his prison; the time, before dawn, a month after the trial and a day or two before the execution, which normally would have followed the sentence immediately, but had been postponed till the Sacred Ship, sent to Delos for the Festival of Apollo, had returned. Till its return ended the Festival, no public execution could take place.

In the *Apology* we saw Socrates with his enemies and the public. Here and in the *Phaedo* we see him with his friends and their feeling for him. When the dialogue opens, he has just awoken to find a rich friend of his own age, who had managed his business affairs, sitting by his bedside. Crito has come to announce the arrival of the ship at the Cape of Sunium, some thirty miles from Athens, and to suggest escape. The first five chapters contain the arguments with which he tries to persuade Socrates to fly.

CRITO

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE

SOCRATES.

CRITO.

SCENE: *The Prison of Socrates.*

43 I. *Socrates.* WHY have you come at this hour, Crito?
It must be quite early?

Crito. Yes, certainly.

Soc. What is the exact time?

Cr. The dawn is breaking.

Soc. I wonder that the keeper of the prison would let you in.

Cr. He knows me, because I often come, Socrates; moreover, I have done him a kindness.

Soc. And are you only just arrived?

Cr. No, I came some time ago.

Soc. Then why did you sit and say nothing, instead of at once awakening me?

Cr. I would not have done it for anything: I wish that I was not myself as sleepless and distressed as I am, and I have been watching with amazement your peaceful slumbers; it was on purpose that I did not wake you, because I wished you to spend your time as happily as might be. I have always thought you to be of a happy disposition; but never did I see anything like the easy, tranquil manner in which you bear this calamity.

Soc. Why, Crito, when a man has reached my age he ought not to be repining at the approach of death.

Cr. And yet other old men find themselves in

similar misfortunes, and age does not prevent them from repining.

Soc. That is true. But you have not told me why you come at this early hour.

Cr. I come to bring you a message which is sad and painful; not, as I believe, to yourself, but to all of us who are your friends, and saddest of all to me.

Soc. What? Has the ship come from Delos, on the arrival of which I am to die?

Cr. No, the ship has not actually arrived, but she will probably be here to-day, as persons who have come from Sunium tell me that they left her there; and therefore to-morrow, Socrates, will be the last day of your life.

2. *Soc.* Very well, Crito; if such is the will of God, I am willing; but my belief is that there will be a delay of a day.

Cr. Why do you think so?

Soc. I will tell you. I am to die on the day after the arrival of the ship. 44

Cr. Yes; that is what the authorities say.

Soc. But I do not think that the ship will be here until to-morrow; this I infer from a vision which I had last night, or rather only just now, when you fortunately allowed me to sleep.

Cr. And what was the nature of the vision?

Soc. There appeared to me the likeness of a woman, fair and comely, clothed in bright raiment, who called to me and said: O Socrates,

'The third day hence to fertile Phthia shalt thou go.'¹

¹ Homer, *Il.* ix. 363. 'The words are spoken by Achilles, who means that he can get *home* in three days' (Burnet). So, too, will S.

Cr. What a singular dream, Socrates!

Soc. There can be no doubt about the meaning, Crito, I think.

3. *Cr.* Yes; the meaning is only too clear. But, oh! my beloved Socrates, let me entreat you once more to take my advice and escape. For if you die I shall not only lose a friend who can never be replaced, but there is another evil: people who do not know you and me will believe that I might have saved you if I had been willing to give money, but that I did not care. Now, can there be a worse disgrace than this—that I should be thought to value money more than the life of a friend? For the world will not believe that I wanted you to escape, and that you refused.

Soc. But why, my dear Crito, should we care about the opinion of the world? Good men, and they are the only persons who are worth considering, will see these things in their true light.

Cr. But you see, Socrates, that the opinion of the world must be regarded, for what is now happening shows that it can do the greatest evil to any one who has lost its good opinion.

Soc. I only wish it were so, Crito; and that the world could do the greatest evil; for then it would also be able to do the greatest good—and what a fine thing this would be!¹ But in reality it can do neither; for it cannot make a man either wise or foolish; and whatever else it does is immaterial.

4. *Cr.* Well, I will not dispute with you; but please

¹ Plato's view was that the capacity for great evil goes with the capacity for great good, and vice versa.

to tell me, Socrates, whether you are not acting out of regard to me and your other friends: are you not afraid that if you escape from prison we may get into trouble with the informers¹ for having stolen you away, and lose either the whole or a great part of our property; or that even a worse evil may happen to 45 us? Now, if you fear on our account, be at ease; for in order to save you, we ought surely to run this, or even a greater risk; be persuaded, then, and do as I say.

Soc. Yes, Crito, that is one fear which you mention, but by no means the only one.

Cr. Fear not—there are persons who are willing to get you out of prison at no great cost; and as for the informers, they are far from being exorbitant in their demands—a little money will satisfy them. My means, which are certainly ample, are at your service, and if you have a scruple about spending all mine, here are strangers who will give you the use of theirs; and one of them, Simmias the Theban, has brought a large sum of money for this very purpose; and Cebes and many others are prepared to spend their money in helping you to escape. I say, therefore, do not give up on our account, and do not say, as you did in the court,² that you will have a difficulty in knowing what to do with yourself anywhere else. For men will love you in other places to which you may go, and not in Athens only; there are friends of mine in Thessaly, if you like to go to them, who will value and protect you, and no Thessalian will give you any trouble.

¹ There was a class of public informers at Athens, who made a living by watching for and prosecuting illegal actions.

² p. 40.

5. *The arguments in this chapter are subtle. 'Don't do what your enemies wish; think of your children; and don't take the cowardly line of least resistance.' It is worth while to think, without reading further, what reply we should make to Crito.*

NOR can I think that you are even doing what is right, Socrates, in betraying your own life when you might be saved; in so acting you are playing into the hands of your enemies, who are hurrying on your destruction. And further I should say that you are deserting your own children; for you might bring them up and educate them; instead of which you go away and leave them, and they will have to take their chance; and if they do not meet with the usual fate of orphans, there will be small thanks to you. No man should bring children into the world who is unwilling to persevere to the end in their nurture and education. But you appear to be choosing the easier part, not the better and manlier, which would have been more becoming in one who professes to care for virtue in all his actions, like yourself. Indeed, I am ashamed not only of you, but of us who are your friends, when I reflect that the whole business will be attributed entirely to our want of courage. The trial need never have come on,¹ or might have been managed differently; but this last act, or crowning folly, will seem to have occurred through our negligence and cowardice, who might have saved you, if
46 we had been good for anything; and you might have saved yourself, for there was no difficulty at all. See

¹ i.e. if S. had gone into exile. Note how little (as with Christ) even his friends and disciples understand his attitude.

now, Socrates, how sad and discreditable are the consequences, both to us and you. Make up your mind then, or rather have your mind already made up, for the time of deliberation is over, and there is only one thing to be done, which must be done this very night, and if we delay at all will be no longer practicable or possible; so I beseech you, Socrates, be persuaded by me, and do as I say.

6. The reply of S. Crito has appealed to what people will think: S. discusses the weight to be attached to public opinion and lays down four principles: that the only opinion worth considering is that of the wise; that not life, but a good life, is what matters; that the good life is a right and noble (or 'beautiful') life; and that it can never be right to do wrong.

Soc. Dear Crito, your zeal is invaluable, if a right one; but if wrong, the greater the zeal the greater the danger; and therefore we ought to consider whether I shall or shall not do as you say. For I am and always have been a man to obey nothing in my nature except the reasoning, which upon reflection appears to me to be the best; and now that this chance has befallen me, I cannot repudiate my own words: the principles which I have hitherto honoured and revered I still honour, and unless we can at once find other and better principles, I am certain not to agree with you; no, not even if the power of the multitude could inflict many more imprisonments, confiscations, deaths, frightening us like children with hobgoblin terrors. What will be the fairest way of considering the question? Shall I return to your old argument about

the opinions of men?—we were saying that some of them are to be regarded, and others not. Now were we right in maintaining this before I was condemned? And has the argument which was once good now proved to be talk for the sake of talking—mere childish nonsense? That is what I want to consider with your help, Crito:—whether the argument seems altered by my present circumstances, and is to be allowed by me or disallowed. That argument, which, as I believe, is maintained by many persons of authority, was to the effect, as I was saying, that the opinions of some men are to be regarded, and of other men not to be regarded. Now you, Crito, are not
47 going to die to-morrow—at least, there is no human probability of this—and therefore you are disinterested and not liable to lose your head owing to the circumstances in which you are placed. Tell me then, whether I am right in saying that some opinions, and the opinions of some men only, are to be valued, and that other opinions, and the opinions of other men, are not to be valued. I ask you whether I was right in maintaining this?

Cr. Certainly.

Soc. The good are to be regarded, and not the bad?

Cr. Yes.

Soc. And the opinions of the wise are good, and the opinions of the unwise are evil?

Cr. Certainly.

7. *Soc.* Come, what view did we take in a parallel case? Is the pupil who devotes himself to the practice of gymnastics supposed to attend to the praise

and blame and opinion of every man, or of one man only—his physician or trainer, whoever he may be?

Cr. Of one man only.

Soc. And he ought to fear the censure and welcome the praise of that one only, and not of the public?

Cr. Clearly so.

Soc. And he ought to act and train, and eat and drink in the way which seems good to his single master who has understanding, rather than according to the opinion of all other men put together?

Cr. True.

Soc. And if he disobeys and disregards the opinion and approval of the one, and regards the opinion of the public who are not experts, will he not come to harm?

Cr. Certainly he will.

Soc. And what will the harm be, whither tending and what affecting, in the disobedient person?

Cr. Clearly, affecting the body; that is what suffers destruction.

Soc. Very good; and is not this true, Crito, of other things which we need not separately enumerate? In questions of right and wrong, fair and foul, good and evil, which are the subjects of our present consultation, ought we to follow the opinion of the public and to fear them; or the opinion of the one expert? ought we not to fear and reverence him more than all the rest of the world: and if we desert him shall we not destroy and injure that principle in us which may be assumed to be improved by right and deteriorated by wrong;—there is such a principle?

Cr. Certainly there is, Socrates.

8. *Soc.* Take a parallel instance:—if, acting under the advice of those who are not expert, we destroy that which is improved by health and is deteriorated by disease, would life be worth having? And that which has been destroyed is—the body?

Cr. Yes.

Soc. Could we live, having an evil and corrupted body?

Cr. Certainly not.

Soc. And will life be worth having, if that higher part of man be destroyed, which is improved by right and depraved by wrong? Do we suppose that principle,⁴⁸ whatever it may be in man, which has to do with right and wrong, to be inferior to the body?

Cr. Certainly not.

Soc. More honourable than the body?

Cr. Far more.

Soc. Then, my friend, we must not regard what the public say of us: but what he, the one man who is an expert in right and wrong, will say, and what the truth will say. And therefore you begin in error when you advise that we should regard the opinion of the public about right and wrong, good and evil, noble¹ and ignoble.—‘Well,’ some one will say, ‘but the public can put us to death.’

Cr. Yes, Socrates; that will clearly be the answer.

Soc. And it is true: but still I find with surprise that the old argument is unshaken as ever. And I should like to know whether I may say the same of another proposition—that not life, but a good life, is to be chiefly valued?

¹ The word (καλός) here rendered ‘noble’ means ‘beautiful’. See p. liii.

Cr. Yes, that also remains unshaken.

Soc. And a good life is equivalent to a right and noble¹ one—that holds also?

Cr. Yes, it does.

9. *Soc.* From these premisses I proceed to argue the question whether I ought or ought not to try and escape without the consent of the Athenians: and if I am clearly right in escaping, let us make the attempt; but if not, let us abandon it. The other considerations which you mention, of money and loss of character and the duty of educating one's children, are, I fear, only the doctrines of the crowd, who would be as ready to restore people to life, if they were able, as they are to put them to death—and with as little reason. But now, as this is the conclusion of our argument, the only question which remains to be considered is, whether we shall do rightly either in escaping or in suffering others to aid in our escape and paying them in money and thanks, or whether in fact that would be wrong; if the latter, then death or any other calamity which may ensue on my remaining here must not be allowed to enter into the calculation.

Cr. I think that you are right, Socrates; how then shall we proceed?

Soc. Let us consider the matter together, and do you either refute me if you can, and I will be convinced; or else cease, my dear friend, from repeating to me that I ought to escape against the wishes of the Athenians: for I am very anxious to do whatever I do 49 with your assent and not against your will. And now

¹ See note on p. 58.

please to consider my first principles, and try how you can best answer me.

Cr. I will.

10. In this chapter S., after his usual manner, defines clearly his 'first principles' and ascertains that they are accepted before drawing out the conclusions that follow from them. Here we see pagan morals at their height. It is not mere preaching; note the anxiety of S. that Crito should not assent if he does not really agree, and his characteristic desire to hear what can be said on the other side.

Soc. Are we to say that we are never intentionally to do wrong, or that in one way we ought and in another way we ought not to do wrong, or is doing wrong always evil and dishonourable, as we have already agreed? Are all our former admissions which were made within a few days to be thrown away? And have we, at our age, been earnestly discoursing with one another all our life long only to discover that we are no better than children? Or, in spite of public opinion, and in spite of consequences whether better or worse, shall we insist on the truth of what was then said, that wrong is always an evil and disgrace to him who acts wrongly? Shall we say so or not?

Cr. Yes.

Soc. Then we must do no wrong?

Cr. Certainly not.

Soc. Nor when injured injure in return, as the public imagine; for we must injure no one at all?

Cr. Clearly not.

Soc. Again, Crito, may we do evil?

Cr. Surely not, Socrates.

Soc. And what of doing evil in return for evil, which is the morality of the public—is that right or not?

Cr. Not right.

Soc. For doing evil to another is the same as injuring him?

Cr. Very true.

Soc. Then we ought not to retaliate or render evil for evil to any one, whatever evil we may have suffered from him. But think, Crito, whether you really mean what you are saying. For this opinion has never been, and never will be popular; and those who are agreed and those who are not agreed upon this point have no common ground, and can only despise one another when they see how widely they differ. Tell me, then, whether you agree with and assent to my first principle, that neither injury nor retaliation nor warding off evil by evil is ever right. And shall that be the premiss of our argument? Or do you decline and dissent from this? For so I have ever thought, and continue to think; but, if you are of another opinion, let me hear what you have to say. If, however, you remain of the same mind as formerly, I will proceed to the next step.

Cr. You may proceed, for I have not changed my mind.

Soc. Then I will go on to the next point, which may be put in the form of a question:—Ought a man to do what he admits to be right, or ought he to betray the right?

Cr. He ought to do what he thinks right.

11. *Having laid down his general principles, S. considers whether flight is consistent with them. The question whether he shall escape reduces itself to the question whether it is right to break the law, and he imagines the Laws themselves appearing to state their claim.*

Soc. But if this is true, what is the application? In
 50 leaving the prison against the will of the Athenians, do I wrong any? or rather do I not wrong those whom I ought least to wrong? Do I not desert the principles which were acknowledged by us to be just—what do you say?

Cr. I cannot tell, Socrates; for I do not know.

Soc. Consider it this way:—Imagine that I am about to run away¹ (you may call the proceeding by any name which you like), and the laws and the government come and question me. ‘Tell us, Socrates,’ they say, ‘what are you about? Are you not going by an act of yours to overthrow us—the laws, and the whole state, as far as in you lies? Do you imagine that a state can subsist and not be overthrown, in which the decisions of law are powerless, and are set aside and trampled upon by individuals?’ What will be our answer, Crito, to these and the like words? Any one, and especially an orator, will have a good deal to say on behalf of the law which requires a sentence to be carried out. He will argue that this law should not be set aside; and shall we reply, ‘Yes; but the state has injured us and given an unjust sentence’? Suppose I say that?

Cr. Very good, Socrates.

¹ The word is that used of deserters and runaway slaves.

12. *Soc.* 'And was that our agreement with you,' the law would answer, 'or were you to abide by the sentence of the state?' And if I were to express my astonishment at their words, the law would probably add: 'Answer, Socrates, instead of opening your eyes—you are in the habit of asking and answering questions. Tell us—what complaint have you to make against us which justifies you in attempting to destroy us and the state? In the first place did we not bring you into existence? Your father married your mother by our aid and begat you. Say whether you have any objection to urge against those of us who regulate marriage.' None, I should reply. 'Or against those of us who after birth regulate the upbringing and education of children, in which you also were trained? Were not the laws, which have the charge of education, right in commanding your father to train you in music and gymnastic?'¹ Right, I should reply. 'Well then, since you were brought into the world and brought up and educated by us, can you deny in the first place that you are our child and servant, as your fathers were before you? And if this is true you are not on equal terms with us; nor can you think that you have a right to do to us what we are doing to you. Would you have any right to strike or abuse or do any other harm to your father or your master, if you had one, because you had been struck or abused by him, or received some other harm at his hands?—you would not say this? And because we think right to destroy you, do you think 51

¹ i.e. the double education of a Greek boy in body and in character and mind. 'Music' is not music in our sense, but a training in literature, music, and dancing.

that you have any right to destroy us in return, and your country as far as you can? Will you, the professor of true 'virtue', pretend that you are justified in this? Has a philosopher like you failed to discover that our country is more to be valued and higher and holier far than mother or father or any ancestor, and more to be regarded in the eyes of the gods and of men of understanding? to be revered and humoured in its anger, even more than a father, and either to be persuaded, or if not persuaded, to be obeyed? And when we are punished by her, whether with imprisonment or stripes, the punishment is to be endured in silence; and if she lead us to wounds or death in battle, we must comply; that is our duty: a man may not yield or retreat or leave his rank, but whether in battle or in a court of law, or in any other place, he must do what his city and his country order him; or he must change their view of what is just: and if he may do no violence to his father or mother, much less may he do violence to his country.' What answer shall we make to this, Crito? Do the laws speak truly, or do they not?

Cr. I think that they do.

13. *Soc.* Then the laws will say: 'Consider, Socrates, if we are speaking truly, that in your present attempt you are going to do us an injury. For, having brought you into the world, and nurtured and educated you, and given you and every other citizen a share in every good which we had to give, we further proclaim to any Athenian by the liberty which we allow him, that if he does not like us when he has become of age and has seen the ways of the city, and made our acquaint-

tance, he may go where he pleases and take his goods with him. None of the laws will forbid him or interfere with him. Any one who does not like us and the city, and who wants to emigrate to a colony or to any other city, may go where he likes, retaining his property. But he who has experience of the manner in which we order justice and administer the state, and still remains, has entered into an implied contract that he will do as we command him. And he who disobeys us is, as we maintain, thrice wrong: first, because in disobeying us he is disobeying his parents; secondly, because we are the authors of his education; thirdly, because he has made an agreement with us that he will duly obey our commands; ⁵² and he neither obeys them nor convinces us that our commands are unjust; and we do not rudely impose them, but give him the alternative of obeying or convincing us;—that is what we offer, and he does neither.

14. 'THESE are the sort of accusations to which, as we were saying, you, Socrates, will be exposed if you carry out your intentions; you, above all other Athenians.' Suppose now I ask, Why I rather than anybody else? They will justly retort upon me that I above all other men have acknowledged the agreement. 'There is clear proof,' they will say, 'Socrates, that we and the city were not displeasing to you. Of all Athenians you have been the most constant resident in the city, which, as you never leave, you may be supposed to love. For you never left Athens either to see the games,¹ except once when you went to the

¹ The four great national festivals, to which Greeks from every state went, were at Olympia, Delphi, Nemea, and the Isthmus (Corinth).

Isthmus, or to any other place unless when you were on military service; nor did you travel as other men do. Nor had you any curiosity to know other states or their laws: your affections did not go beyond us and our state; we were your special favourites, and you acquiesced in our government of you; and here in this city you begat your children, which is a proof of your satisfaction. Moreover, you might in the course of the trial, if you had liked, have fixed the penalty at banishment; the state which refuses to let you go now would have let you go then. But you pretended that you preferred death to exile, and that you were not unwilling to die. And now you have forgotten these fine sentiments, and pay no respect to us the laws, of whom you are the destroyer; and are doing what only a miserable slave would do, running away and turning your back upon the compacts and agreements which you made as a citizen. And first of all answer this very question: Are we right in saying that you agreed to be governed according to us in deed, and not in word only? Is that true or not?' How shall we answer, Crito? Must we not assent?

Cr. We cannot help it, Socrates.

Soc. Then will they not say: 'You, Socrates, are breaking the covenants and agreements which you made with us at your leisure, not in any haste or under any compulsion or deception, but after you have had seventy years to think of them, during which time you were at liberty to leave the city, if we were not to your mind, or if our covenants appeared to you to be unfair. You had your choice, and might have gone either to Sparta or Crete, both which states are

often praised by you for their good government,¹ or to some other Hellenic or foreign state. Whereas 53 you, above all other Athenians, seemed to be so fond of the state, or, in other words, of us her laws (and who would care about a state which has no laws?), that you never stirred out of her; the halt, the blind, the maimed were not more stationary in her than you were. And now you run away and forsake your agreements. Not so, Socrates, if you will take our advice; do not make yourself ridiculous by escaping out of the city.

15. *S. here replies to the arguments for escape urged by Crito in c. 5.*

‘FOR just consider, if you offend and err in this sort of way, what good will you do either to yourself or to your friends? That your friends will be driven into exile and deprived of citizenship, or will lose their property, is tolerably certain; and you yourself, if you fly to one of the neighbouring cities, as, for example, Thebes or Megara, both of which are well governed,² will come to them as an enemy, Socrates, and their government will be against you, and all patriotic citizens will cast an evil eye upon you as a subverter of the laws, and you will confirm in the minds of the judges the justice of their own condemnation of you. For he who is a corrupter of the laws is more than

¹ Some Athenians—among them Plato—were fond of contrasting the Spartan virtues of strict discipline and devotion to the state with the laxer attitude of democratic Athens; an attitude like that of some Englishmen to pre-War Prussia.

² Note in this chapter the different characters of the Greek states. Thessaly was a country of rich, rather philistine landowners.

likely to be a corrupter of the young and foolish portion of mankind. Will you then flee from well-ordered cities and well-behaved men, and is existence worth having on these terms? Or will you go to them without shame, and talk to them, Socrates? And what will you say to them? What you say here about virtue and justice and institutions and laws being the best things among men? Would that be decent of you? Surely not. But if you go away from well-governed states to Crito's friends in Thessaly, where there is great disorder and licence, they will be charmed to hear the tale of your escape from prison, set off with ludicrous particulars of the manner in which you were wrapped in a goatskin or some other disguise, and metamorphosed as the manner is of runaways; but will there be no one to remind you that in your old age you were not ashamed to violate the most sacred laws from a miserable desire of a little more life? Perhaps not, if you keep them in a good temper; but if you offend them you will meet with degrading abuse; you will live, but how?—by servility and cringing to everybody; and doing what?—eating and drinking in Thessaly, having gone abroad in order that you may get a dinner. And where will be your fine sentiments about justice and
54 virtue? Say that you wish to live for the sake of your children—you want to bring them up and educate them—will you take them into Thessaly and deprive them of Athenian citizenship? Is this the benefit which you will confer upon them? Or are you under the impression that they will be better cared for and educated here if you are still alive, although parted from them; for your friends will take care of them?

Do you fancy that if you go to Thessaly they will take care of them, but that if you go to the next world they will not take care of them? Nay; but if they who call themselves friends are good for anything, they will—to be sure they will.

16. 'LISTEN, then, Socrates, to us who have brought you up. Think not of life and children first, and of the right afterwards, but of the right first, that you may be justified before the rulers of the world below.¹ For neither will you nor any that belong to you be happier or holier or better in this life, or happier in another, if you do as Crito bids. Now you depart in innocence, a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim, not of the laws but of men. But if you go forth, returning evil for evil, and injury for injury, breaking the covenants and agreements which you have made with us, and wronging those whom you ought least of all to wrong, that is to say, yourself, your friends, your country, and us, we shall be angry with you while you live, and our brethren, the laws in the world below, will receive you as an enemy; for they will know that you have done your best to destroy us. Listen, then, to us and not to Crito.'

17. THIS, dear Crito, is the voice which I seem to hear murmuring in my ears, like the sound of the flute in the ears of the Corybant;² that voice, I say, is

¹ Here S. assumes the existence of a future world and judgement, which in the *Apology* (p. 42) he had left an open question: 'with Crito there is no need for the reserve which was appropriate before an Athenian jury' (Burnet).

² The Corybants worshipped Cybele, the mother of the gods, with wild dances to the sound of flutes and other instruments.

humming in my ears, and prevents me from hearing any other. And I know that anything more which you may say will be vain. Yet speak, if you have anything to say.

Cr. I have nothing to say, Socrates.

Soc. Leave me then, Crito, to fulfil the will of God, and to follow whither he leads.

Here S. raises a much bigger question than his own immediate problem—the question how far the State has an unconditional claim on the obedience of its members—and that claim has never been more strongly put. There is no room for conscientious objectors or passive resisters; a man's duty is to obey the law even if it is unjustly administered, even apparently if it is unjust, unless he can convince the State of its injustice. Here S., who in another mood might have analysed the problem further, considered the possibilities of a conflict between right and the claims of the State, and discussed the citizen's duty in the case of conflict, argues for unconditional obedience. His attitude is, that a man who is not prepared to obey the State can leave it, but that if he remains, he must obey. We seem to be in the presence of the totalitarian state with its unlimited claims, and we may well hesitate to accept a doctrine with such far-reaching consequences. The shrewd common-sense arguments in c. 15 may seem more cogent, if less impressive, than the austere, impersonal appeal of the Laws.

On the other hand, the main arguments of S., that anarchy ensues if the laws are disobeyed, and that by remaining in a state we implicitly contract to accept its laws, need answering; and the first is a strong argument. Perhaps those who live in a country where law rules and

constitutional methods prevail are not in a position fully to understand it, or to know the meaning of the words, 'no state can survive in which the decisions of law are powerless and are set aside and trampled on by individuals': but there must be many people in Europe who appreciate their truth. Further—and this is a very important point—S. talks throughout of Nomoi, not of Polis, and the unconditional obedience which he demands is to the Laws, not to the State. He does not regard the State as the embodiment of Power or of Race—conceptions which he would have felt meaningless or monstrous. To him, the State is its Laws, and Law is the embodiment of the immortal element in us, the 'appointment of Reason',¹ of which the aim is to bring man to hate wrong, and to love, or at least acquiesce in, right.² No reader of the last two chapters can suppose that S. would have done what he believed wrong because the State ordered him to do it. His own life shows this. When the Thirty, then in control of Athens, ordered him to arrest an innocent man, he refused.³ For, it must be remembered, the citizen always has an alternative. If he does not approve the Laws, he can leave the State. (S. had not contemplated the modern problem of those who are unable to leave a state of which they disapprove.) One further point may also be noted: the doctrine of the unlimited supremacy of the State is usually expounded by those who use it to control and coerce others; here it is held by an individual who insists on sacrificing his life to the public good.

¹ *Laws*, 714.

² *Ib.* 863. In the *Statesman*, 293–302, Plato has an interesting discussion of the case for and against the absolute rule of law, in which he concludes that an all-wise and all-just individual would be the best ruler, but that, in the absence of a natural queen-bee of the human hive, law is the best substitute.

³ *p.* 31.

Readers may differ about the theoretic question raised by the Crito. But there will be no disagreement about the literary art of its opening or the imaginative quality of its close; nor can one admire too much the great principles which S. lays down in c. 6 f. or the calm resolution with which he dies for the right as he sees it.

PHAEDO

INTRODUCTION

THE *Phaedo* is the third act of the drama which these dialogues compose. Apparently its subject is 'the immortality of the soul', for the greater part of the discussion and all the closest reasoning deal with this. But it is wrong to suppose, as most readers do, that the interest of the *Phaedo* lies in the arguments for immortality. Its true subject is the ideal of the spiritual life; its permanent value is its picture of this and the passionate plea of Socrates that men should live the life of the spirit on earth and so become capable of living it hereafter.

The dialogue is also a portrait of Socrates and of his intimates. The *Apology* reveals him as the ordinary Athenian knew him, for there he is speaking in public and to a general audience. In the *Phaedo* he is with friends who share his intellectual interests, the atmosphere is more intimate and we see more of his mind and inner self. But it is the portrait of a man in a crisis. The *Phaedo* narrates the incidents between early morning and evening on the day of the execution of Socrates and ends with a description of his last moments. We see him facing death and learn why it neither alarms nor distresses him and on what conditions others can also face it cheerfully. Briefly the answer is that the final reality in the universe is the world of the mind and spirit, and that, so far as they can, the good and wise live in that world while they are on earth, but are hindered by the body from which death alone can set them finally free. Why

then should they fear to die? This belief is the centre of the dialogue, as it was the centre of the life of Socrates. But it raises the further question: Are there reasonable intellectual grounds for believing that the soul is immortal and, if so, what kind of life may it expect after death? Thus we are brought first to the discussion of immortality which occupies most of the dialogue, though it is secondary and auxiliary to its real theme, and then to the picture of the future world in the 'myth' at its close. So in the *Phaedo* the character and death of Socrates, the intellectual grounds for a belief in immortality, the portrait of the good life in this world, and the vision of a life after death are blended together with an art which is much more than art. Gomperz does not exaggerate when he says that the *Phaedo* bears 'the impress of all Plato's excellences. The acute dialectician and the imaginative poet, the fervid votary of free intellectual inquiry, and the enthusiast glowing with intense religious emotion—all these characters appear side by side'.¹

There is a Greek story of a man who read the *Phaedo* and, convinced by it of the truth of immortality, killed himself in order to see Plato (he must have read Socrates' remarks on suicide carelessly). But there cannot be many other people who have been persuaded of a future life by the arguments for it in the *Phaedo*; they seem too abstract and metaphysical for such a vital issue, and even Simmias, though seeing no flaw in them, feels 'uncertain in his mind when he thinks of the greatness of the subject and the feebleness of man'.² Indeed, the real argu-

¹ *Greek Thinkers*, iii. 35.

² p. 179.

ment in the *Phaedo* for the soul's immortality lies not in the subtle dialectical discussion but in the belief, expressed in the theory of ideas, that there is an eternal world to which the soul has entry and to which by nature it belongs.

Even here doubt arises; 'I myself feel', says Simmias, 'how hard or rather impossible is the attainment of any certainty about questions such as these in the present life.' What then is to be done? 'We must do', he continues, 'one of two things: either learn the truth from others or discover it for ourselves, or, if this be impossible, we must take the best and most irrefragable of human theories, and let this be the raft on which we sail through life, unless we can find some word of God which will carry us more surely and safely.'¹ It is the method which Socrates followed in argument: as there, so in life, he assumed as an hypothesis the best theory that he could find, tested it by its consequences, and held to it so long as it seemed to fit the facts—unlike those who in argument and in life drift along in a chaos of particulars without any general principle at all. To Socrates 'the best and most irrefragable' of human theories was the conviction of the reality and supremacy of the spiritual life of which the *Phaedo* is the first and the greatest philosophical assertion in European thought. So he believed, and so he lived.

It is this spiritual philosophy, and not the elaborate arguments for immortality, which has so profoundly influenced religious thought. Here is the original of such sayings of St. Paul as 'the things that are seen are temporal but the things that are unseen are

¹ p. 137 f.

eternal'; 'the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made'; 'ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God'—the first two pure Platonism, the last Platonism adapted to the Christian creed. Here appears for the first time in the world a conception which has haunted it ever since and has seemed to millions of human beings to express their experience. Its echoes are heard in Shelley as well as in St. Paul,

The One remains, the Many change and pass,¹

and when people talk of 'Platonism' it is generally this view of life that they have in mind.² In one form or another it underlies every spiritual theory of the world; but no one has felt it more intensely and expressed it more powerfully than its creator.

The *Phaedo* has other points of interest besides its main theme. Its close is possibly the finest piece of narrative ever written. As a discussion, it is a model of what discussion should be, searching and precise, candid and open, courteous and without heat. As a dialogue, it is a masterpiece of art. The actual argument indeed follows the formal lines usual in Plato, but for the rest, Nature herself could not be more

¹ Cp. 'In my comparative estimate of body and soul I am Platonist—the outer world has ever been to me something of a dream—all physical science seems to me, in some measure, a science, not of reality but of unreality—and man with his unruly impotent body and struggling, dissatisfied soul seems to me to fulfil the conditions of a prisoner and an exile, rather than those of a free citizen in the world which he inhabits' (Petre, *My Way of Faith*, p. 197).

² See Inge, *The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought*, p. 12 f. and *passim*, and J. A. Stewart on 'Platonism in English Poetry', in *English Literature and the Classics*.

natural. That is obvious not only in the narrative parts at the opening and the close of the dialogue, but in the breaks and interludes of the discussion.¹ These are introduced partly for variety, partly to mark the different stages of the argument; Plato uses them with admirable skill to reveal the character of Socrates, much as Shakespeare in a different medium uses the monologues of *Hamlet* or *Richard II* to portray their inner being.² But though Plato makes the interludes, they appear to be made by the speakers themselves. So, one feels, Socrates and Cebes and Simmias actually talked.

It is open to question whether all the philosophical views attributed in the dialogue to Socrates are his—particularly the doctrine of 'Ideas' and the touches of Orphism. But there can be no doubt about the historical accuracy of the death scene; the meeting of his friends, Xanthippe, the jailer, the last moments are described as they were, and we see not only how a philosopher faces death, but how Socrates died.

The *Phaedo* cannot be understood without some knowledge of the theory of 'Ideas' which is central in its argument, or of 'Orphism', which influences the thought of Plato here and elsewhere and dominates the 'myth' at the close of the dialogue. Something, therefore, must be said of both.

¹ Any one interested in the technique of writing will find these breaks worth examining in detail (see esp. p. 142 f., p. 156 f.). Note the skill with which the discussion is brought back to the central theme of the dialogue—the spiritual life (p. 181).

² See esp. p. 145 f.

The Theory of 'Ideas'

'How strangely', writes a German scholar, 'has "idea" developed in common linguistic use; the Platonic word lives in all modern *Kultursprachen*.' And not only in them. Few people who see in a grocer's window a tin labelled 'Ideal Milk' think of Plato, yet not only the word but the meaning of it, there put to such strange uses, originates in the central and most-discussed doctrine of his philosophy.

The theory of 'Ideas' which appears in the *Phaedo* is probably the most important contribution ever made to the philosophy of religion. Here for the first time in history we meet the doctrine of the spiritual life and its supremacy. But in its origin the 'Ideal Theory' has a different and humbler purpose. It begins as an attempt to solve the problem of knowledge, and extends into a theory of the world and of the life of man.

1. How do we know? What is it that we know? Take for instance a chair. There are millions of different chairs, hundreds of different kinds of chairs. When we see a chair, we see a particular piece of wood or steel; but we call it a chair because we recognize that it belongs to a certain class of things with certain characteristics. The word used by Plato for 'class' in this sense is *εἶδος*, which has been turned into English as 'Idea', but which means Form—a word that suggests better what was in his mind. In modern philosophic language it would be called a 'Universal'. To this 'Idea' or 'Form' or 'Universal' of a chair all the particular chairs in the world are

somehow related, and in virtue of this relation we call them chairs. So with every other concrete thing—chairs, tables, beds, houses, &c. Each of them has its 'Idea'. It is the same with abstract things like Beauty, Justice, &c. Behind each beautiful object is the 'Idea' of Beauty, in virtue of which we call it beautiful, behind each just action is the 'Idea' of Justice, in virtue of which we call it just. So, when we come across a chair or a just action, we only know it because we know the 'Idea' which lies behind it. We know 'Ideas', 'Forms', 'Universals', and we know particulars only through these.

2. How do we know 'Ideas'? Not through the senses; we can see or touch a chair, but not the 'Idea' of a chair. That is grasped not by the senses but by the mind. This is even more obviously true with Beauty, Justice, Courage, Truth: these are grasped by the mind.

3. Do the 'Ideas' (e.g. of a chair or of Beauty) exist independently of particular chairs and of particular beautiful things, and what is the relation of each 'Idea' to its particulars? Plato describes their relation by saying, sometimes that the particulars 'participate' in their 'Idea', sometimes that they 'imitate' it—he does not explain how—and he thinks that the 'Ideas' exist independently of the particulars: there is somewhere—to be grasped by the mind—an 'Idea' of a chair, an 'Idea' of Beauty. (Aristotle, who in this contradicts Plato, says that Socrates did not believe in the independent existence of the 'Ideas', and this statement is one of the grounds for suspecting the accuracy of the Platonic picture of Socrates.)

4. So far we have been dealing with a theory of knowledge—one which for the most part would be commonly accepted to-day. But, in Plato's hands, this theory of knowledge becomes something much more important; it leads to conclusions which, if true, profoundly affect our view of life.

The 'Ideas' are far more important than the particular objects which 'participate' in them. The 'Idea' of a chair is more perfectly a chair than any concrete chair. The 'Idea' of Beauty is more completely Beauty than any beautiful sight or person. But if the 'Ideas' are more perfect than any particulars, they are more important. Their world is the real world, beside which the world of our senses is a shadow.

5. So we get a conception of two worlds: the higher world of the 'Ideas', supra-sensual, perfect, eternal; and the lower world of our senses, which, though nearer to us, is yet less real than the other, and chiefly important because of the suggestions and hints which it gives of the world of 'Ideas'. Clearly the task of man, with these two worlds before him, is to live as far as possible in the higher, the real, perfect, eternal world, the world of thought, or, as we should say, the spiritual world. *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem.*

6. But this ascent from shadows and images to the truth can only be made by the soul, and the soul is therefore the important thing in man, the part of him which can grasp the world of 'Ideas' and live in it. The body, whose organs are the senses, is always entangled in the lower world of sense, unable to perceive the 'Ideas' and inclined to ignore them. The

secret of a successful life is to live as far as possible the life of the soul, communing with the higher, more real world which it alone can enter.

7. Here, clearly, is the germ of an extreme asceticism which denies and despises the body, and the *Phaedo* (p. 97 f.) shows how far Plato is swept into this very un-Greek (and, in a sense, un-Platonic) attitude. But, as we have seen, there is the germ also of something far more important, the belief in the supremacy of the spiritual life.

8. The 'Ideal Theory', then, has two aspects. It is a Theory of Knowledge, an attempt to explain how we know, of which a modern philosopher has said that it is one of the most successful attempts hitherto made.¹ But it is also a Theory of Reality, and here opinion as to its truth will vary. No one indeed to-day would accept all its details or suppose, for instance, that 'Ideas' of chairs, tables, and other material objects have an existence independent of the mind; but taking it generally, while some will regard it as 'a gigantic and yet splendid error', the conversion of a true theory of Knowledge into a false theory of Being,² others will feel that it gives a fundamentally true account of the world. Here, as in his view of the state in the *Republic*, Plato raises a permanent problem and represents a permanent mode of the human mind. The 'Ideal Theory' is a touchstone to separate out those who do and those who do not believe in the existence of an unseen eternal world from which the visible world draws all its meaning and value.

¹ Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, p. 142.

² Frazer, *Plato's Ideal Theory*, p. 10.

Orphism

There are many allusions in the *Phaedo* to the doctrine of Orphism. The earlier Greek belief was that after death men lead an impotent existence as bloodless ghosts. In the sixth century B.C., or before, there came from the north a mystical creed, associated with the name of the fabled poet Orpheus, teaching a new doctrine of human nature and promising a very different immortality. According to it man has a twofold nature: a soul, and a body which imprisons and defiles it; and the problem of life is to keep the soul, man's immortal part, pure in this world so that in the next it can inherit blessedness. After death the pure go to eternal bliss, the incurably evil to eternal suffering, the rest suffer purgatorial pains, atoning each sin (according to some accounts) ten times over, till the time comes for them to be re-incarnated and reborn. The Orphic priests offered to save men from suffering in the after-life, teaching their initiates how to keep the soul pure by ritual and by purity of life (wherever the words 'pure' or 'purification' occur in Plato, suspect Orphic influence), and giving them instructions—a Traveller's Guide to Hades, as it were—which would enable them to recognize their surroundings, and find their way, in the underworld. How elaborate was this geography of Hades one can see from the myth at the close of the *Phaedo* and from some directions given to Orphic initiates which were found on a gold plate in a grave at Thurii in south Italy. The following is an extract from the latter: 'You will find in the halls of Hades a spring on the left and a white cypress by

it. Come not near this spring. And you will find another, cool water flowing from the Lake of Memory, with guardians in front of it. Say: I am the child of earth and starry heaven and my origin is heavenly; and you yourselves know it: I am parched and dying with thirst; quick, give me the cool water that flows from the Lake of Memory. And they will give you to drink of that divine spring.'

Such are some of the features of Orphism. The influence of its description of the after-life on Christian eschatology is unmistakable. Plato took from it what appealed to him.¹

¹ See esp. pp. 107, 109, 180 f.

PHAEDO

PERSONS OF THE DIALOGUE

PHAEDO, *who is the narrator
of the Dialogue to*
ECHECRATES *of Phlius.*
SOCRATES.
ATTENDANT OF THE PRISON.

APOLLODORUS.
SIMMIAS.
CEBES.
CRITO.

SCENE: *The Prison of Socrates.*

PLACE OF THE NARRATION: *Phlius.*

1. *The opening of the dialogue gives a glimpse of an unfamiliar side of Greece—the intellectual life of what was little more than a provincial market town.*

The scene is Phlius, a small Greek city in the mountains some fifteen miles west of Corinth, where, according to tradition, was first used a word momentous in human history—philosophy. Echecrates, a member of a local intellectual group, is talking with Phaedo (who later founded the philosophic school of Elis), a youth, still wearing his hair long, who has stopped at Phlius on his way home from Athens.

Echecrates. WERE you yourself, Phaedo, in the
57 prison with Socrates on the day when he drank the
poison?¹

Phaedo. Yes, Echecrates, I was.

Ech. I should so like to hear about his death. What did he say in his last hours? We were informed that he died by taking poison, but no one knew anything more; for hardly any Phliasian goes to Athens now, and it is a long time since any

¹ The usual method of execution was by drinking hemlock-juice.

stranger from Athens has found his way hither; so that we had no sure account.

Phaed. Did you not hear of the proceedings at the trial?

Ech. Yes; some one told us about the trial, and we could not understand why, having been condemned, he should have been put to death, not at the time, but long afterwards. What was the reason of this?

Phaed. An accident, Echecrates: the stern of the ship which the Athenians send to Delos happened to have been crowned on the day before he was tried.

Ech. What is this ship?

Phaed. It is the ship in which, according to Athenian tradition, Theseus went to Crete when he took with him the seven girls and seven youths,¹ and saved himself and them. And they are said to have vowed to Apollo at the time, that if they were saved they would send a yearly mission to Delos. Now this custom still continues, and the whole period of the voyage to and from Delos, beginning when the priest of Apollo crowns the stern of the ship, is a sacred season, during which the city is not allowed to be polluted by public executions; and when the vessel is detained by contrary winds, the time spent in going and returning is very considerable. As I was saying, the ship was crowned on the day before the trial, and this was the reason why Socrates lay in prison and was not put to death until long after he was condemned.²

2. In this chapter we discern, faint and blurred, something of the members of the Socratic circle: the emotional

¹ Minos, King of Crete, imposed this human tribute on the Athenians, in vengeance for his son, whom they killed. ² In fact, thirty days.

Apollodorus, who was 'always abusing himself and every one else except Socrates', a passionate admirer of his master, but 'otherwise silly'; Critobulus, Crito's son, famous for his beauty; Hermogenes, brother of the Callias 'who had spent more money on the "sophists" than every one else put together'; Epigenes, to whom S. had recommended gymnastic exercises for his poor physique; Aeschines, son of a sausage-seller, writer of Socratic dialogues, who tried to improve his finances by manufacturing perfumes and later by attaching himself to the court of Dionysius Prince of Syracuse, but who was more successful in philosophy than commerce; Antisthenes, ambitious, shrewd, and capable in money matters, founder of the famous Cynic School; Ctesippus, 'a very well-bred young man but with a young man's wildness'; the two Thebans, Simmias and Cebes, of whose temperament and powers we see something in the dialogue, where they put the opposite point of view to S., and one of whom was prominent, twelve years later, in expelling the Spartan garrison from his native city; and Aristippus, from Cyrene in Africa, sensualist and epicurean.¹

Ech. What was the manner of his death, Phaedo? What was said or done? And which of his friends were with him? Or would not the authorities allow them to be present—so that he had no friends near him when he died?

Phaed. No; there were several of them with him.

Ech. If you have nothing to do, I wish that you would tell me what passed, as exactly as you can.

¹ Refs.: *Sympos.* 173; *Xen. Apol.* 28; *Plato, Apol.* 20; *Euthyd.* 257; *Xen. Mem.* iii. 4, ii. 5, ii. 1.

Phaed. I have nothing at all to do, and will try to gratify your wish. To be reminded of Socrates is always the greatest delight to me, whether I speak myself or hear another speak of him.

Ech. You will have listeners who are of the same mind with you, and I hope that you will be as exact as you can.

Phaed. I had a singular feeling at being in his company. For I could hardly believe that I was present at the death of a friend, and therefore I did not pity him, Echecrates; he died so fearlessly, and his words and bearing were so noble and gracious, that to me he appeared blessed. I felt that in going to the other world he could not be without a divine call, and that he would be happy, if any man ever ⁵⁹ was, when he arrived there; and therefore I did not pity him as might have seemed natural at such an hour. But I had not the pleasure which I usually feel in philosophical discourse (for philosophy was the theme of which we spoke). I was pleased, but in the pleasure there was also a strange admixture of pain; for I reflected that he was shortly to die, and this double feeling was shared by us all; we were laughing and weeping by turns, especially the excitable Apollodorus—you know him and his ways?

Ech. Yes.

Phaed. He was quite beside himself; and I and all of us were greatly moved.

Ech. Who were present?

Phaed. Of native Athenians there were, besides Apollodorus, Critobulus and his father Crito, Hermogenes, Epigenes, Aeschines, Antisthenes; likewise Ctesippus of the deme of Paeania, Menexenus,

and some others; Plato,¹ if I am not mistaken, was ill.

Ech. Were there any strangers?

Phaed. Yes, there were; Simmias the Theban, and Cebes, and Phaedondes; Euclid and Terpsion, who came from Megara.

Ech. And was Aristippus there, and Cleombrotus?

Phaed. No, they were said to be in Aegina.

Ech. Any one else?

Phaed. I think that these were nearly all.

Ech. Well, and what did you talk about?

3. *Phaed.* I will begin at the beginning, and endeavour to repeat the entire conversation. On the previous days we had been in the habit of assembling early in the morning at the court in which the trial took place, and which is not far from the prison. There we used to wait talking with one another until the opening of the prison doors (for they were not opened very early); then we went in and generally passed the day with Socrates. On the last morning we assembled sooner than usual, having heard on the day before when we quitted the prison in the evening that the sacred ship had come from Delos; and so we arranged to meet very early at the accustomed place. On our arrival, the jailer who answered the door, instead of admitting us, came out and told us to stay until he called us. 'The Eleven',² he said, 'are now with Socrates; they are taking off his chains, and giving orders that he is to die to-day.' He soon re-

¹ One of the two mentions of their author in the *Dialogues*.

² See p. 39 n.

turned and said that we might come in. On entering 60 we found Socrates just released from chains, and Xanthippe, whom you know, sitting by him, and holding his child in her arms. When she saw us she uttered a cry and said, just like a woman: 'O Socrates, this is the last time that either you will converse with your friends, or they with you.'¹ Socrates turned to Crito and said: 'Crito, will one of you take her home.' Some of Crito's people accordingly led her away, crying out and beating herself. And when she was gone Socrates, sitting up on the couch, bent and rubbed his leg, saying, as he was rubbing: How singular is the thing called pleasure, and how curiously related to pain, which might be thought to be the opposite of it; for they are never present to a man at the same instant, and yet he who pursues either is generally compelled to take the other, as if they had two bodies but were joined by a single head. And I cannot help thinking that if Aesop had remembered them, he would have made a fable about God trying to reconcile their strife, and how, when he could not, he fastened their heads together; and this is the reason why when one comes the other follows: as I know by my own experience now, when, after the pain in my leg which was caused by the chain, pleasure appears to succeed.

4. *A talk about music, so irrelevant that it must be genuine, slides into a discussion whether life or death is better, and we are on the way to the central theme of the*

¹ We see the wife of S.—one sentence reveals her banality. S.'s words are spoken kindly.

dialogue. Notice the skill with which Plato allows the dialogue to develop naturally. The casual reference to Aesop reminds Cebes that Evenus wished to know why S. had been turning Aesop into verse. S. in answering this sends a kindly message to Evenus, bidding him join S. in an after-life. The surprise of Simmias at this message draws from S. an expression of his belief that the true philosopher will meet death gladly, and this leads to the discussion which occupies the rest of the dialogue.

UPON this Cebes said: I am glad, Socrates, that you have mentioned the name of Aesop. For it reminds me of a question which has been asked by many, and was asked of me only the day before yesterday by Evenus¹ the poet—he will be sure to ask it again, and therefore if you would like me to have an answer ready for him, you may as well tell me what I should say to him—he wanted to know why you, who never before wrote a line of poetry, now that you are in prison are turning Aesop's fables into verse, and also composing that hymn in honour of Apollo.

Tell him, Cebes, he replied, what is the truth—that I had no idea of rivalling him or his poems; to do so, as I knew, would be no easy task. But I wanted to satisfy my conscience and to test the meaning of certain dreams, and see whether it was 'music' in this sense that they ordered me to compose. For the same dream came to me sometimes in one form, and sometimes in another, but always saying the same or nearly the same words—'Cultivate and make music', said the dream. And hitherto I had imagined that this was

¹ See p. 8. Diogenes Laertius, ii. 42, quotes some trivial lines supposed to be from these poems, but probably spurious.

only intended to exhort and encourage me in the study of philosophy, which has been the pursuit of 61 my life, and is the noblest and best of music.¹ The dream was urging me to do what I was already doing, in the same way that the competitor in a race is urged by the spectators to run when he is already running. But I was not certain of this; for the dream might have meant music in the popular sense of the word, and being under sentence of death, and the festival giving me a respite, I thought that I should satisfy my conscience, and, in obedience to the dream, compose a few verses before I departed. And first I made a hymn in honour of the god of the festival, and then considering that a poet, if he is really to be a poet, should write fiction, not fact, and that I am no writer of fiction, I took some fables of Aesop, which I had ready at hand and which I knew—they were the first I came upon—and turned them into verse.

5. TELL this to Evenus, Cebes, and bid him farewell; say that I would have him come after me if he is a wise man, and not tarry; I am likely to be going to-day, for the Athenians say that I must.

Simmias said: What a message for such a man! I have often met him and I should say that, as far as I know him, he will never take your advice unless he is obliged.

Why, said Socrates, is not Evenus a philosopher?

I think that he is, said Simmias.

¹ S. regarded philosophy as the supreme harmony, and this is the 'music' to which his life has been devoted. But he thinks that the dream may refer to music in the ordinary sense, and be an instruction to him to write poetry. Note his belief in dreams, and his compliance, here and elsewhere, with the religious usages of his time.

Then he, or any man who has the spirit of philosophy, will be willing to die; but he will not take his own life, for that is held to be unlawful.

Here he changed his position, and put his legs off the couch on to the ground, and during the rest of the conversation he remained sitting.

Why do you say, inquired Cebes, that a man ought not to take his own life, but that the philosopher will be ready to follow the dying?

Socrates replied: And have you, Cebes and Simmias, who are the disciples of Philolaus,¹ never heard him speak of this?

Yes, but his language was obscure, Socrates.

My words, too, are only an echo; but there is no reason why I should not repeat what I have heard: and indeed, as I am going to another place, it is very suitable for me to be thinking and talking of² the nature of the pilgrimage which I am about to make. What can I do better in the interval between this and the setting of the sun?

6. *A view of life and of man's relation to God. S. gives two reasons why suicide is wrong: first, the Orphic doctrine,³ which he professes himself unable to understand, that in life men are imprisoned in the body and may not escape from their prison; then, his own view that men are 'the property of the gods' and not entitled to act as if they were their own masters.*

¹ A Pythagorean philosopher, who had lived in Thebes, the home of Cebes and Simmias.

² The Greek word means 'to tell stories'. The fact of a future life may be established by argument, its details can only be conjectured.

³ See p. 82.

THEN tell me, Socrates, why is suicide held to be unlawful? as I have certainly heard Philolaus, about whom you were just now asking, affirm when he was staying with us at Thebes; and there are others who say the same, although I have never understood what was meant by any of them.

Do not lose heart, replied Socrates, and the day ^{6a} may come when you will understand. I suppose that you wonder why, when other things which are evil may be good at certain times and to certain persons, death is to be the only exception, and why, when a man is better dead, he is not permitted to be his own benefactor, but must wait for the hand of another.

Fery true, said Cebes, laughing gently and speaking in his native Boeotian.

I admit the appearance of inconsistency in what I am saying; but there may not be any real inconsistency after all. There is a doctrine whispered in secret that man is a prisoner who has no right to open the door and run away; this is a great mystery which I do not quite understand. Yet I too believe that the gods are our guardians, and that we men are one of their possessions. Do you not agree?

Yes, I quite agree, said Cebes.

And if one of your own possessions, an ox or an ass, for example, took the liberty of putting himself out of the way when you had given no intimation of your wish that he should die, would you not be angry with him, and would you not punish him if you could?

Certainly, replied Cebes.

Then, if we look at the matter thus, there may be reason in saying that a man should wait, and not take

his own life until God summons him, as he is now summoning me.

7. But, says C., how can you reconcile the view that in life we are the property of the gods (which must be a desirable state) with the view that death is an advantage? In answer S. explains in c. 9-13 why the philosopher is not afraid of death.

YES, Socrates, said Cebes, there seems to be truth in what you say. And yet how can you reconcile this seemingly true belief that God is our guardian and we his possessions, with the willingness to die which you were just now attributing to the philosopher? That the wisest of men should be willing to leave a service in which they are ruled by the gods, who are the best of rulers, is not reasonable; for surely no wise man thinks that when set at liberty he can take better care of himself than the gods take of him. A fool may perhaps think so—he may argue that he had better run away from his master, not considering that his duty is to remain to the end, and not to run away from the good, and that there would be no sense in his running away. The wise man will want to be ever with him who is better than himself. Now this, Socrates, is the reverse of what was just now said; for upon this view the wise man should sorrow and the fool rejoice at passing out of life.

- 63 The insistence of Cebes seemed to please Socrates. Here, said he, turning to us, is a man who is always inquiring, and is not so quickly convinced by the first thing which he hears.¹

¹ The type of man whom S. admires.

And certainly, added Simmias, the objection which he is now making does appear to me to have some force. For what can be the meaning of a truly wise man wanting to fly away and lightly leave a master who is better than himself? And I rather imagine that Cebes is referring to you; he thinks that you are too ready to leave us, and too ready to leave the gods whom you acknowledge to be our good masters.

Yes, replied Socrates; there is reason in what you say. And so you think that I ought to answer your indictment as if I were in a court?

We should like you to do so, said Simmias.

8. THEN I must try to make a more convincing defence before you than I did before the jury. For I am quite ready to admit, Simmias and Cebes, that I ought to be grieved at death, if I were not persuaded in the first place that I am going to other gods who are wise and good (of which I am as certain as I can be of any such matters), and secondly (though I am not so sure of this last) to men departed, better than those whom I leave behind; and therefore I do not grieve as I might have done, for I have good hope that there is yet something remaining for the dead, and as has been said of old, some far better thing for the good than for the evil.

But do you mean to take away your thoughts with you, Socrates? said Simmias. Will you not impart them to us?—for they are a benefit in which we too are entitled to share. Besides, if you succeed in convincing us, that will be the answer to the charge against yourself.

I will do my best, replied Socrates. But you must

first let me hear what Crito wants;¹ he has long been wishing to say something to me.

Only this, Socrates, replied Crito,—the attendant who is to give you the poison has been telling me, and he wants me to tell you, that you are not to talk much; talking, he says, increases heat, and this is apt to interfere with the action of the poison; persons who excite themselves are sometimes obliged to take a second or even a third dose.

Then, said Socrates, let him mind his business and be prepared to give the poison twice or even thrice, if necessary; that is all.

I knew quite well what you would say, replied Crito; but I was obliged to satisfy him.

Never mind him, he said.

And now, my jury, I desire to prove to you that a man who has really lived a philosopher's life has reason to be confident when he is about to die, and
64 that after death he may hope to obtain the greatest good in the other world. And how this may be, Simmias and Cebes, I will endeavour to explain.

9. *In the next five chapters S. explains why a philosopher does not mind death. The aim of philosophy is the life of the spirit. To such a life the body is an impediment, and the philosopher on earth is always trying to escape from the body and its passions (or, as Plato puts it, 'to practise death and dying'). How, then, should he regret death, that separates the soul completely from the body, and sets it free to live the spiritual life, which is the real life, and which cannot be fully lived while men are in the body?*

¹ This break in the conversation indicates a new development in the dialogue.

I HOLD that the true votary of philosophy is likely to be misunderstood by other men; they do not perceive that his whole practice is of death and dying;¹ and if this be so, and he has had the desire of death all his life long, why when his time comes should he repine at that which he has been always practising and desiring?

Simmias said laughingly: Though not in a laughing humour, you have made me laugh, Socrates; for I cannot help thinking that most men when they hear your words will say how truly you have described philosophers, and our people at home will likewise say that the life which philosophers desire is in reality death, and that they have found them out to be deserving of the death which they desire.²

And they are right, Simmias, in thinking so, with the exception of the words 'they have found them out'; for they have not found out either what is the nature of that death which the true philosopher deserves, or how he deserves or desires death. But enough of them—let us discuss the matter among ourselves. Do we believe that there is such a thing as death?

To be sure, replied Simmias.

Is it not the separation of soul and body? And when the soul exists in herself, and is released from

¹ For an equal preoccupation with death, but a very different view of it, see Montaigne, *Essais*, i. 20, 'Que philosopher, c'est apprendre à mourir'.

² This shows how the ordinary Athenian viewed philosophy. To S. it was setting the soul free by dying to the body and its affections (this is what he means by describing it as 'the practice of death'); to the average man it was a living death. 'Our people at home'—Simmias' fellow countrymen the Thebans, who were famous for their philistinism—would certainly take that view.

the body and the body is released from the soul—death, surely, is nothing else than this?

Just so, he replied.

There is another question, which will probably throw light on our present inquiry if you and I can agree about it: Is it like a philosopher to care about the pleasures—if they are to be called pleasures—of eating and drinking?

Certainly not, answered Simmias.

And what about sexual pleasures—does he care for them?

By no means.

And will he value the other ways of indulging the body, for example, the acquisition of fine dress, or sandals, or other adornments of the body? Instead of caring about them, does he not rather despise anything more than nature needs? What do you say?

I should say that the true philosopher would despise them.

Would you not say that he is entirely concerned with the soul and not with the body? He would like, as far as he can, to get away from the body and to turn to the soul.

Quite true.

In matters of this sort philosophers, above all
65 other men, may be observed in every sort of way to dis sever the soul from its communion with the body.

Very true.

Whereas, Simmias, the rest of the world are of opinion that to him who finds no pleasure in such things and has no part in bodily pleasures, life is not

worth having; and that he who is indifferent about them is as good as dead.

That is also true.

10. *Another reason why the philosopher is glad to be rid of the body is that the senses are misleading and that it is the mind which grasps truth. The eye never sees a perfect circle or an absolutely straight line; we can only think them. We never see Beauty or Justice, &c.; we can only think them. It is with the mind, not with the senses, that we apprehend 'absolute reality', the 'essences of things', 'true being'. Only after death, which sets us free from the body, shall we see things as they are.*

We here meet the famous Ideal Theory (see p. 78). Plato calls the realities which the mind apprehends εἶδη or 'Forms'.

WHAT, again, shall we say of the actual acquirement of wisdom?—is the body, if invited to share in the inquiry, a hinderer or a helper? I mean to say, have sight and hearing any truth in them? Are they not, as the poets are always telling us, inaccurate witnesses? And yet, if even they are inaccurate and indistinct, what is to be said of the other senses?—for you will allow that they are the best of them?

Certainly, he replied.

Then, when does the soul attain truth?—for in attempting to consider anything in company with the body she is obviously deceived.

True.

Then must not true existence be revealed to her in thought, if at all?

Yes.

And thought is best when the mind is gathered into herself and none of these things trouble her—neither sounds nor sights nor pain nor any pleasure,—when she takes leave of the body, and has as little as possible to do with it, when she has no bodily sense or desire, but is aspiring after true being?

Certainly.

And in this the philosopher dishonours the body; his soul runs away from his body and desires to be alone and by herself?

That is true.

Well, but there is another thing, Simmias: Is there or is there not an absolute justice?

Assuredly, there is.

And an absolute beauty and absolute good?

Of course.

But did you ever behold any of them with your eyes?

Certainly not.

Or did you ever reach them with any other bodily sense?—and I speak not of these alone, but of absolute greatness, and health, and strength, and of the essence or true nature of everything. Has the reality of them ever been perceived by you through the bodily organs? Or rather, is not the nearest approach to the knowledge of their several natures made by him who so orders his intellectual vision as to have the most exact conception of the essence of each thing which he considers?

Certainly.

And he attains to the purest knowledge of them who goes to each with the mind alone, not introducing or intruding in the act of thought sight, or any

other sense together with reason, but with the very 66
light of the mind in her own clearness searches into
the very truth of each; he who has got rid, as far as
he can, of eyes and ears and, so to speak, of the whole
body, these being in his opinion distracting elements
which when they infect the soul hinder her from
acquiring truth and knowledge—who, if not he, is
likely to attain to the knowledge of true being?¹

What you say has a wonderful truth in it, Socrates,
replied Simmias.

11. AND when real philosophers consider all these
things, will they not be led to make a reflection which
they will express to each other in words something
like the following? 'There seems to be a track which,
with the aid of thought, will bring us to the goal of
our inquiry; and it is this—to realize that while we
are in the body, and while the soul is infected with
the evils of the body, our desire will not be satisfied:
and our desire is of the truth. For the body is a source
of endless trouble to us by reason of the mere require-
ment of food; and is liable also to diseases which
overtake and impede us in the search after true being:
it fills us full of loves, and lusts, and fears, and fancies
of all kinds, and endless foolery, and in fact, as men
say, takes away from us the power of thinking at all.
Whence come wars, and fightings, and factions?
Whence but from the body and the lusts of the body?
Wars are occasioned by the love of money, and money

¹ Cp. Rupert Brooke on how the disembodied souls will

Hear, know and say

What this tumultuous body now denies;

And feel, who have laid our groping hands away;

And see, no longer blinded by our eyes.

has to be acquired for the sake and in the service of the body; and by reason of all these impediments we have no time to give to philosophy; and, last and worst of all, even if we are at leisure and betake ourselves to some speculation, the body is always breaking in upon us, causing turmoil and confusion in our inquiries, and so amazing us that we are prevented from seeing the truth. It has been proved to us by experience that if we would have pure knowledge of anything we must be quit of the body—the soul in herself must behold things in themselves: and then we shall attain the wisdom which we desire, and of which we say that we are lovers; not while we live, but after death; for if, while in company with the body, the soul cannot have pure knowledge, one of two things follows—either knowledge is not to be attained at all, or, if at all, after death. For then, and
67 not till then, the soul will be parted from the body and exist in herself alone. In this present life, I reckon that we make the nearest approach to knowledge when we have the least possible intercourse or communion with the body, and are not infected with the bodily nature, but keep ourselves pure until the hour when God himself is pleased to release us. And thus having got rid of the foolishness of the body we shall be pure and hold converse with the pure, and know of ourselves the clear light everywhere, which is no other than the light of truth. For the impure are not permitted to approach the pure.’ These are the sort of words, Simmias, which the true lovers of knowledge cannot help saying to one another, and thinking. You would agree, would you not?

Undoubtedly, Socrates.

12. BUT, my friend, if this be true, there is great reason to hope that, going whither I go, when I have come to the end of my journey, I shall attain that which has been the pursuit of my life. And therefore I go on my way rejoicing, and not I only, but every other man who believes that his mind is prepared and purified.

Certainly, replied Simmias.

And what is purification but the separation of the soul from the body, as the old tradition¹ says; the habit of the soul gathering and collecting herself into herself from all sides out of the body; the dwelling in her own place alone, both in another life, and in this, as far as she can; the release of the soul from the chains of the body?

Very true, he said.

And this separation and release of the soul from the body is termed death?

To be sure, he said.

And the true philosophers, and they only, are ever seeking to release the soul. Is not the separation and release of the soul from the body² their especial study?

That is true.

And, as I was saying at first, there would be a ridiculous contradiction in men studying to live as nearly as they can in a state of death, and yet re-pining when it comes upon them.

Clearly.

And the true philosophers, Simmias, are always occupied in the practice of dying, and so to them least of all men is death terrible. Look at the matter

¹ i.e. Orphic doctrine; see p. 82.

² We should say 'the practice of the spiritual life'.

this way—if they have been in every way the enemies of the body, and are wanting to be alone with the soul, when this desire of theirs is granted, how inconsistent would they be if they trembled and repined, instead of rejoicing at their departure to that place where, when they arrive, they hope to gain that which in life they desired—and this was wisdom—
68 and at the same time to be rid of the company of their enemy. Many a man has been willing to go to the world below animated by the hope of seeing there an earthly love, or wife, or son, and conversing with them. And will he who is a true lover of wisdom, and is strongly persuaded in like manner that only in the world below he can worthily enjoy her, still repine at death? Will he not depart with joy? Surely he will, my friend, if he is a true philosopher. For he will have a firm conviction that there, and there only, he can find wisdom in her purity. And if this be true, he would be very absurd, as I was saying, if he were afraid of death.

He would, indeed, replied Simmias.

13. *To Plato the virtues are spiritual realities, based on the spiritual nature of the universe, not mere conveniences based on utility. Hence the different attitude to virtue of the average man and of the philosopher. The former is brave or temperate, not because these virtues are in themselves good but because they bring some advantage or avoid some inconvenience; as when a man is brave in order to avoid death or public contempt, or temperate in order to avoid the consequences of over-eating. The philosopher desires courage and self-control,*

not for their practical results but because they belong to the real world, the world of the spirit: they are sterling coin for which he gladly exchanges the base currency of cowardice and intemperance.

S. ends the chapter by pointing out the relation of philosophy to religion. The philosopher discards the earthly and physical in order to apprehend what is eternal and real; religion reveals to the believer a vision of the unseen world.

AND when you see a man who is repining at the approach of death, is not his reluctance a sufficient proof that he is not a lover of wisdom, but a lover of the body, and probably at the same time a lover of either money or power, or both?

Quite so, he replied.

And is not courage, Simmias, a quality which is specially characteristic of the philosopher?

Certainly.

Temperance again, even in the common sense of the word, the control and regulation of the passions, and the sense of superiority to them—is not temperance a virtue belonging only to those who despise the body, and who pass their lives in philosophy?

Most assuredly.

For the courage and temperance of other men, if you will consider them, are really a contradiction.

How so?

Well, he said, you are aware that death is regarded by men in general as a great evil.

Very true, he said.

And do not courageous men face death because they are afraid of yet greater evils?

That is quite true.

Then all except the philosophers are courageous only from fear, and because they are afraid; and yet that a man should be courageous from fear, and because he is a coward, is surely strange.

Very true.

And are not the temperate exactly in the same case? They are temperate because they are intemperate—which might seem to be a contradiction, but is nevertheless the sort of thing which happens with this foolish temperance. For there are pleasures which they are afraid of losing; and in their desire to keep them, they abstain from some pleasures, because they are overcome by others; and although to
69 be conquered by pleasure is called by men intemperance, to them the conquest of pleasure consists in being conquered by pleasure. And that is what I mean by saying that, in a sense, they are made temperate through intemperance.

Such appears to be the case.

Yet the exchange of one fear or pleasure or pain for another fear or pleasure or pain, and of the greater for the less, as if they were coins, is not the true exchange of virtue. My dearest Simmias, is there not one true currency for which all things ought to be exchanged—and that is wisdom? And only in wisdom's company do courage, temperance, justice—in a word, true virtue—really exist; nor does it make any difference whether fears or pleasures or other similar goods or evils are present or not. The virtue which is severed from wisdom and depends on these exchanges, is a painted show of virtue only, nor is there any freedom or health or truth in her; but the

reality consists in a purification from¹ all these things, and in temperance, and justice, and courage; and wisdom herself is a sort of purification. The founders of the Mysteries would appear to have had a real meaning, and were not talking nonsense when they intimated in a metaphor long ago that he who passes unsanctified and uninitiated into the world below will lie in the Slough, but that he who arrives there after initiation and purification will dwell with the gods. For 'many', as they say in the Mysteries, 'are the Thyrsus-bearers, but few are the Mystics'—meaning by the latter, as I interpret the words, 'the true philosophers'. In the number of whom, during my whole life, I have been seeking, according to my ability, to find a place;—whether I have sought in a right way or not, and whether I have succeeded or not, I shall know for certain in a little while, if God will, when I myself arrive in the other world—such is my belief. And therefore I maintain that I am right, Simmias and Cebes, in not grieving or repining at parting from you and my masters in this world, for I believe that I shall equally find good masters and friends in another world. But most men do not believe this saying; if then I succeed in convincing you by my defence better than I did the Athenian judges, it will be well.

14. Cebes points out that S.'s view rests on the assumption that the soul is immortal, and that it falls to the ground

¹ This passage is full of allusions to Orphism—'Purification', 'Mysteries', 'Initiation', 'the Slough' (in which the wicked were plunged), 'Thyrsus' (the wand wreathed in ivy carried by the worshippers of Dionysus).

if, as most people think, the soul perishes at death. We are thus brought to the central theme of the dialogue, the immortality of the soul.

CEBES answered: I agree, Socrates, in the greater
 70 part of what you say. But in what concerns the soul, men are apt to be incredulous; they fear that when she has left the body her place may be nowhere, and that on the very day of death she may perish and come to an end—immediately on her release from the body, issuing forth dispersed like smoke or air and in her flight vanishing away into nothingness. If she could only be collected into herself after she has obtained release from the evils of which you were speaking, there would be good reason to hope, Socrates, that what you say is true. But surely it requires a great deal of persuasion and many proofs to show that when the man is dead his soul yet exists, and has any force or intelligence.

True, Cebes, said Socrates; and shall I suggest that we converse a little of the probabilities of these things?

I am sure, said Cebes, that I should greatly like to know your opinion about them.

I reckon, said Socrates, that no one who heard me now, not even if he were one of my old enemies, the comic poets,¹ could accuse me of idle talking about matters in which I have no concern. If you please, then, we will proceed with the inquiry.

15. *S. begins by remarking that if the Orphic doctrine of reincarnation is true, the soul must exist after death. He*

¹ An allusion to the attacks of Aristophanes and others.

supports this view by an ingenious argument, that contrary states pass into each other, and therefore that death must pass into its contrary, life. This argument is based on the philosophy of Heraclitus, who saw the world as a complex of opposites tending to pass into each other—life and death, working and sleeping, youth and age, day and night, winter and summer, good and evil, &c.—a tide in a continual flux of ebb and flow.

The argument ignores the fact that states do not always pass into their contraries: there is no more certainty that a dead man will live again than that an extinguished fire will be relit. And even if the argument were sound, eternal life would be impossible, for life would pass into its contrary, death.

SUPPOSE we consider the question whether the souls of men after death are or are not in the world below.¹ There comes into my mind an ancient doctrine² which affirms that they are in the other world, having come from earth, and that, returning hither, they are born again from the dead. Now if it is true that the living come from the dead, then our souls must exist in the other world, for if not, how could they have been born again? And this would be conclusive, if there were any real evidence that the living are only born from the dead; but if this is not so, then other arguments will have to be adduced.

Very true, replied Cebes.

Then let us consider the whole question, not in relation to man only, but in relation to animals generally, and to plants, and to everything of which there is generation,³ and the proof will be easier. Are not all things which have opposites

¹ For the use of small print see p. viii.

² Held by the Orphics (and others).

³ The Greek word translated 'generation' means 'coming into existence', and can thereby be applied to anything that at one moment is not and the next 'comes to be'—to heat, cold, waking, sleeping, death, and life, no less than to living beings.

generated out of their opposites? I mean such things as good and evil, just and unjust—and there are innumerable other opposites which are generated out of opposites. And I want to show that in all opposites there is of necessity a similar alternation; I mean to say, for example, that anything which becomes greater must become greater after being less.

True.

And that which becomes less must have been once greater
71 and then have become less.

Yes.

And the weaker is generated from the stronger, and the swifter from the slower.

Very true.

And the worse is from the better, and the more just is from the more unjust.

Of course.

And is this true of all opposites? and are we convinced that all of them are generated out of opposites?

Yes.

And in this universal opposition of all things, are there not also two intermediate processes which are ever going on, from one to the other opposite, and back again; where there is a greater and a less there is also an intermediate process of increase and diminution, and that which grows is said to wax, and that which decays to wane?

Yes, he said.

And there are many other processes, such as division and composition, cooling and heating, which equally involve a passage into and out of one another. And this necessarily holds of all opposites, even though not always expressed in words—they are really generated out of one another, and there is a passing or process from one to the other of them?

Very true, he replied.

16. WELL, and is there not an opposite of life, as sleep is the opposite of waking?

True, he said.

And what is it?

Death, he answered.

And these, if they are opposites, are generated the one from the other, and have their two intermediate processes also?

Of course.

Now, said Socrates, I will analyse one of the two pairs of opposites which I have mentioned to you, and also its intermediate processes, and you shall analyse the other to me. One of them I term sleep, the other waking. The state of sleep is opposed to the state of waking, and out of sleeping waking is generated, and out of waking, sleeping; and the process of generation is in the one case falling asleep, and in the other waking up. Do you agree?

I entirely agree.

Then, suppose that you analyse life and death to me in the same manner. Is not death opposed to life?

Yes.

And they are generated one from the other?

Yes.

What is generated from the living?

The dead.

And what from the dead?

I can only say in answer—the living.

Then the living, whether things or persons, Cebes, are generated from the dead?

That is clear, he replied.

Then the inference is that our souls exist in the world below?

That is true.

And one of the two processes or generations is visible—for surely the act of dying is visible?

Surely, he said.

What then is to be the result? Shall we exclude the opposite process? and shall we suppose Nature to walk on one

leg only? Must we not rather assign to death some corresponding process of generation?

Certainly, he replied.

And what is that process?

Return to life.

And return to life, if there be such a thing, is the birth of
72 the dead into the world of the living?

Quite true.

Then here is a new way by which we arrive at the conclusion that the living come from the dead, just as the dead come from the living; and this, if true, affords a most certain proof that the souls of the dead exist in some place out of which they come again.

Yes, Socrates, he said; the conclusion seems to flow necessarily out of our previous admissions.

17. AND that these admissions were not unfair, Cebes, he said, may be shown, I think, as follows: If generation were in a straight line only, and there were no compensation or circle in nature, no turn or return of elements into their opposites, then you know that all things would at last have the same form and pass into the same state, and there would be no more generation of them.¹

What do you mean? he said.

A simple thing enough, which I will illustrate by the case of sleep, he replied. You know that if there were no alternation of sleeping and waking, the tale of the sleeping Endymion² would in the end have no meaning, because all other things would be asleep too, and he would not be distinguishable from the rest. Or if there were composition only, and no division of substances, then the chaos of Anaxagoras³ would come

¹ Note that this argument implies the belief that the principle of the 'conservation of energy', which earlier Greek thinkers had divined and applied to matter, applies also to the soul (A. H.).

² A mythological character who fell into an unending sleep.

³ The philosophy of A. was summed up in the phrase: 'In the beginning all things were together [in a chaos]; then Mind put them in order.' The

again. And in like manner, my dear Cebes, if all things which partook of life were to die, and after they were dead remained in the form of death, and did not come to life again, all would at last die, and nothing would be alive—what other result could there be? For if the living spring from any other things, and they too die, must not all things at last be swallowed up in death?

There is no escape, Socrates, said Cebes; and to me your argument seems to be absolutely true.

Yes, he said, Cebes, it is and must be so, in my opinion; and we have not been deluded in making these admissions; but I am confident that there truly is such a thing as living again, and that the living spring from the dead, and that the souls of the dead are in existence, and that the good souls have a better portion than the evil.

18. *We pass to an argument for immortality based on the famous Platonic doctrine of Reminiscence or Recollection, of which there are so many echoes in English poetry from Henry Vaughan's 'Retreat' to Wordsworth's 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality'. Briefly the stages of the argument are these. Plato begins by some remarks on the way in which we are reminded of things through the Association of Ideas: we are reminded of a person if we see something either associated with him (e.g. his coat) or like him (e.g. his picture). So we are reminded of the idea of Equality by seeing things (e.g. pieces of wood) which are apparently equal. But they would not seem to us equal unless we had already the idea of Equality. How did we get that idea? Not from the senses, for Equality is not visible or tangible. Clearly, then, we must*

point of these two illustrations is: if there were no alternations of sleeping and waking, there would be nothing strange in the unending sleep of Endymion; if substances were never divided, they would remain in the chaos in which they were before Mind 'put them in order'.

have been born possessing the idea of Equality; though we were not conscious of it till the sight of apparently equal objects 'reminded' us of it. So, too, with other ideas, which the senses cannot grasp—Beauty, Justice, and other abstract notions. Whence came these ideas into the mind, unless we knew them in a previous life and were reminded of them when we meet objects on earth which partake of them; e.g. of Beauty by beautiful things, of Equality by things that seem equal? But if the soul existed in a previous life, its life is not confined to earth; it was alive before our birth. Whatever may be thought of Plato's views, the subtlety yet lucidity of the argument reveals both their author's genius and the powers of the Greek language as a vehicle of philosophical discussion. For a lucid discussion of the problem, here raised by Plato, of the source of our knowledge of general ideas, see Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, c. 9 f.

CEBES added: Your favourite doctrine, Socrates, that knowledge is simply recollection, if true, also necessarily implies a previous time in which we have learnt that which we now recollect. But this would be impossible unless our soul had
73 been in some place before existing in the form of man; here then is another proof of the soul's immortality.

But tell me, Cebes, said Simmias, interposing, what arguments are urged in favour of this doctrine of recollection. I am not very sure at the moment that I remember them.

One excellent proof, said Cebes, is afforded by questions. If you put a question to a person in a right way, he will give a true answer of himself, but how could he do this unless there were knowledge and a correct idea already in him? And this is most clearly shown when he is taken to a diagram or to anything of that sort.¹

¹ In the *Meno* (83 f.) a slave who knows no geometry is led by question and answer to formulate accurately geometrical propositions. This fact

But if, said Socrates, you are still incredulous, Simmias, I would ask you whether you may not agree with me when you look at the matter in another way;—I mean, if you are still incredulous as to whether knowledge is recollection?

Incredulous I am not, said Simmias; but I want to have this doctrine of recollection brought to my own recollection, and, from what Cebes has said, I am beginning to recollect and be convinced: but I should still like to hear what you were going to say.

This is what I would say, he replied:—We should agree, if I am not mistaken, that what a man recollects he must have known at some previous time.

Very true.

Are we agreed that, when knowledge arises in the following way, it is recollection—I mean, when a person who, having seen or heard or in any way perceived anything, knows not only that, but has a conception of something else which is the subject not of the same, but of some other kind of knowledge, may he not be fairly said to recollect that of which he has the conception?

What do you mean?

I mean what I may illustrate by the following instance:—The knowledge of a lyre is not the same as the knowledge of a man?

True.

And yet what is the feeling of lovers when they recognize a lyre, or a garment, or anything else which the beloved has been in the habit of using? Do not they, from knowing the lyre, form in the mind's eye an image of the youth to whom the lyre belongs? And this is recollection. Similarly, often any one who sees Simmias is reminded of Cebes; and there are endless examples of the same thing.

does not prove more than that men can reason correctly, and so from given premisses arrive at the conclusion to which the premisses point, but S. argues from it that since the slave had learnt no geometry in this life, he must have existed in a previous life where he knew it.

Endless, indeed, replied Simmias.

And recollection is most commonly a process of recovering that which has been already forgotten through time and inattention.

Very true, he said.

Well; and may you not also from seeing the picture of a horse or a lyre remember a man? and from the picture of Simmias, you may be led to remember Cebes?

True.

Or you may also be led to the recollection of Simmias himself?

74 Quite so.

19. AND in all these cases, the recollection may be derived from things either like or unlike?¹

It may be.

And when the recollection is derived from like things, then another consideration is sure to arise, which is—whether the likeness in any degree falls short or not of that which is recollected?

Very true, he said.

And shall we proceed a step farther, and affirm that there is such a thing as equality, not of one piece of wood or stone with another, but that, over and above this, there is absolute equality? Shall we say so?

Say so, yes, replied Simmias, and swear to it, with all the confidence in life.

And do we know this absolute essence?²

To be sure, he said.

And whence did we obtain our knowledge? Did we not see equal pieces of wood and stone and the like, and gather

¹ 'Like' objects, such as a portrait, and 'unlike' objects, such as a lyre, may both remind us of a person.

² The words here translated, in the abstract English way, 'absolute essence', in Greek are more concrete and definite—'itself what it is' (αὐτὸ ὃ ἐστίν).

from them the idea of an equality which is different from them? For you will acknowledge that there is a difference. Or look at the matter in another way:—Do not the same pieces of wood or stone appear at one time equal, and at another time unequal?

That is certain.

But do real equals ever seem unequal? or did equality seem the same as inequality?

Impossible, Socrates.

Then these (so-called) equals are not the same as the idea of equality?

I should say, clearly not, Socrates.

And yet from these equals, although differing from the idea of equality, you conceived and attained that idea?

Very true, he said.

Which might be like, or might be unlike them?

Yes.

But that makes no difference: whenever from seeing one thing you conceived another, whether like or unlike, there must surely have been an act of recollection?

Very true.

But what would you say of equal portions of wood and stone, or other material equals? and what is the impression produced by them? Are they equals in the same sense in which absolute equality is equal? or do they fall short of this perfect equality in a measure?¹

Yes, he said, in a very great measure too.

And must we not allow that when I or any one, looking at any object, observes that the thing which he sees aims at being some other thing, but falls short of, and cannot be, that other thing, but is inferior, he who makes this observation must have had a previous knowledge of that to which the other, although similar, was inferior?²

¹ Though two pieces of wood may appear equal, in fact they rarely, if ever, are so.

² Plato's argument is that we could not judge whether things are equal

Certainly.

And has not this been our own case in the matter of equals and of absolute equality?

Precisely.

Then we must have known equality previously to the time
75 when we first saw the material equals, and reflected that all these apparent equals strive to attain absolute equality, but fall short of it?

Very true.

And we recognize also that this absolute equality has only been known, and can only be known, through the medium of sight or touch, or of some other of the senses, which are all alike in this respect?

Yes, Socrates, as far as the argument is concerned, one of the senses is the same as the other.

From the senses, then, is derived the knowledge that all sensible things aim at an absolute equality of which they fall short?

Yes.

Then before we began to see or hear or perceive in any way, we must have had a knowledge of absolute equality, or we could not have referred to that standard the equals which are derived from the senses?—for to that they all aspire, and of that they fall short.

No other inference can be drawn from the previous statements.

And did we not see and hear and have the use of our other senses as soon as we were born?

Certainly.

Then we must have acquired the knowledge of equality at some previous time?

Yes.

or not, unless we already had the idea of equality. Therefore we could not have got this idea from anything we have seen on earth, because absolutely equal things do not exist on earth. It must, therefore, have been knowledge pre-existent to our birth.

That is to say, before we were born, I suppose?
True.

20. AND if we acquired this knowledge before we were born, and were born having the use of it, then we also knew before we were born and at the instant of birth not only the equal or the greater or less, but all other 'ideas'; for we are not speaking only of equality, but of beauty, goodness, justice, holiness, and of all which we stamp with the name of essence¹ in the dialectical process, both when we ask and when we answer questions. Of all this we may certainly affirm that we acquired the knowledge before birth?

We may.

But if, after having acquired, we have not forgotten what in each case we acquired, then we must always have come into life having knowledge, and shall always continue to know as long as life lasts—for knowing is the acquiring and retaining knowledge and not forgetting. Is not forgetting, Simmias, just the losing of knowledge?

Quite true, Socrates.

But if the knowledge which we acquired before birth was lost by us at birth,² and if afterwards by the use of the senses we recovered what we previously knew, will not the process which we call learning be a recovering of the knowledge which is our own, and may not this be rightly termed recollection?

Very true.

So much is clear—that when we perceive something, either 76

¹ 'Essence' (see p. 116); i.e. Beauty, Goodness, &c., as opposed to beautiful or good things. 'Dialectical process': i.e. the method of questioning which S. used to arrive at definitions. 'Ideas': when printed in inverted commas, the word is used in the special Platonic sense (see p. 78 f.).

² Cf. Wordsworth for this Platonic theory:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.

At birth we forget our previous life, and the 'essences'—Goodness, Beauty, Justice, Equality, &c., which we knew in it. But when we come across a beautiful thing or a just action on earth, it recalls the Beauty and Justice which we once saw.

by the help of sight, or hearing, or some other sense, from that perception we are able to obtain a notion of some other thing like or unlike which is associated with it, but has been forgotten. Whence, as I was saying, one of two alternatives follows:—either we had this knowledge at birth, and continued to know through life; or, after birth, those who are said to learn only remember, and learning is simply recollection.

Yes, that is quite true, Socrates.

21. AND which alternative, Simmias, do you prefer? Had we the knowledge at our birth, or did we recollect the things which we knew previously to our birth?

I cannot decide at the moment.

At any rate, you can decide whether he who has knowledge will or will not be able to give an account of his knowledge? What do you say?

Certainly, he will.

But do you think that every man is able to give an account of these very matters about which we were speaking?

Would that they could, Socrates, but I rather fear that to-morrow, at this time, there will no longer be any one alive who is able to give an account of them such as ought to be given.

Then you are not of opinion, Simmias, that all men know these things?

Certainly not.

They are in process of recollecting that which they learnt before?

Certainly.

But when did our souls acquire this knowledge—not since we were born as men?

Certainly not.

And therefore, previously?

Yes.

Then, Simmias, our souls must also have existed without

bodies before they were in human form, and must have had intelligence.

Unless indeed you suppose, Socrates, that these notions are given us at the very moment of birth; for this is the only time which remains.

Yes, my friend, but if so, when do we lose them? for they are not in us when we are born—that is admitted. Do we lose them at the moment of receiving them, or if not, at what other time?

No, Socrates, I was talking nonsense without realizing it.

22. THEN may we not say,¹ Simmias, that if, as we are always repeating, there is an absolute beauty, and goodness, and an absolute essence of all things; and if to this we refer all our sensations, and with this compare them, finding these 'ideas' to be pre-existent and our inborn possession—then our souls, like them, must have had a prior existence, but if not, there would be no force in the argument? There is the same proof that these 'ideas' must have existed before we were born, as that our souls existed before we were born; and if not the 'ideas', then not the souls.

Yes, Socrates; I am convinced that there is precisely the same necessity for the one as for the other; and the argument retreats successfully to the position that the existence of the soul before birth cannot be separated from the existence of the essence of which you speak. For there is nothing which to my mind is so patent as that beauty, goodness, and the other notions of which you were just now speaking, have a most real and absolute existence; and I am satisfied with the proof.

Well, but is Cebes equally satisfied? for I must convince him too.

I think, said Simmias, that Cebes is satisfied: although he is the most incredulous of mortals, yet I believe that he is sufficiently convinced of the existence of the soul before birth.

¹ The following passage summarizes the argument.

23. *The argument seems to have proved that the soul existed before birth. If the previous argument is correct—that contrary states pass into each other—then death must pass into life, and the soul therefore must also exist after death.*

BUT that after death the soul will continue to exist is not yet proven even to my own satisfaction. There is still the difficulty of the feeling of the many to which Cebes was referring—the feeling that when the man dies the soul will be dispersed, and that this may be the extinction of her. For admitting that she may have been born elsewhere, and framed out of other elements, and was in existence before entering the human body, why, after having entered in and gone out again, may she not herself be destroyed and come to an end?

Very true, Simmias, said Cebes; about half of what was required has been proven; to wit, that our souls existed before we were born:—that the soul will exist after death as well as before birth is the other half, of which the proof is still wanting, and has to be supplied; when that is given, the demonstration will be complete.

But that proof, Simmias and Cebes, has been already given, said Socrates, if you put the two arguments together—I mean this and the former one, in which we admitted that everything living is born of the dead. For if the soul exists before birth, and in coming to life and being born can be born only from death and dying, must she not after death continue to exist, since she has to be born again?—Surely the proof which you desire has been already furnished.

24. *A break in the discussion.*

STILL I suspect that you and Simmias would be glad to probe the argument further. Like children, you are haunted with a fear that when the soul leaves the body, the wind may really blow her away and scatter her; especially if a man should

happen to die in a great storm and not when the sky is calm.

Cebes answered with a smile: Then, Socrates, you must argue us out of our fears—and yet, strictly speaking, they are not our fears, but there is a child within us who has such terrors: we must persuade him not to be afraid of death as if it was a hobgoblin.

Socrates said: Let the voice of the charmer be applied daily until you have charmed away the fear.

And where shall we find a good charmer of our fears, 78 Socrates, when you are gone?

Hellas, he replied, is a large place, Cebes, and has many good men, and there are foreign peoples not a few: seek for him among them all, far and wide, sparing neither pains nor money; for there is no better way of spending your money. And you yourselves must seek, one with another; for perhaps you will not find any more capable charmers than yourselves.

The search, replied Cebes, shall certainly be made. And now, if you please, let us return to the point of the argument at which we digressed.

By all means, replied Socrates; what else should I please? Very good.

25. *A further argument for immortality, in three stages:*

(1) *Composite things can be changed, dissolved, and broken up; but not simple, uncompounded things. If the soul is in the first class, it may be destroyed; not so, if it is in the second.*

(2) *Individual things (e.g. beautiful or equal objects) (a) change, (b) can be perceived by the senses. But Beauty and Equality and the other 'Ideas' (a) do not change, (b) cannot be perceived by the senses, but only by the mind.*

(3) *The soul seems to belong to the latter group, for (a) it is at home in the world of thought, which is the*

changeless world, and it is confused by the world of the senses; (b) it is invisible. Further (c), its nature is to control the body, which suggests that it belongs to an order of being different from the body. Therefore it seems likely to be immortal.

MUST we not, said Socrates, ask ourselves what that is which, as we imagine, is liable to be scattered, and about which we fear? and what again is that about which we have no fear? And then we may proceed further to inquire whether that which suffers dispersion is or is not of the nature of soul—our hopes and fears as to our own souls will turn upon the answers to these questions.

Very true, he said.

Now the compound or composite may be supposed to be naturally capable, as of being compounded, so also of being dissolved; but that which is uncompounded, and that only, must be, if anything is, indissoluble.

Yes; I should imagine so, said Cebes.

And the uncompounded may be assumed to be the same and unchanging, whereas the compound is always changing and never the same.

I agree, he said.

Then now let us return to the previous discussion. Is that 'idea' or essence, which in the dialectical process¹ we define as essence or true existence—whether essence of equality, beauty, or anything else—are these essences, I say, liable at times to some degree of change? or are they each of them always what they are, having the same simple self-existent and unchanging forms, not admitting of variation at all, or in any way, or at any time?

They must be always the same, Socrates, replied Cebes.

And what would you say of the many individual beautiful things—whether men or horses or garments or any other things which are named by the same names and may be called

¹ See n. 1 on p. 119.

equal or beautiful—are they all unchanging and the same always, or quite the reverse?¹ May they not rather be described as almost always changing and hardly ever the same, either with themselves or with one another?

The latter, replied Cebes; they are always in a state of change.

And these you can touch and see and perceive with the senses, but the unchanging things you can only perceive with the mind—they are invisible and are not seen?

That is very true, he said.

26. WELL, then, added Socrates, let us suppose that there are two sorts of existences—one seen, the other unseen.

Let us suppose them.

The seen is the changing, and the unseen is the unchanging?

That may be also supposed.

And, further, is not one part of us body, another part soul?

To be sure.

And to which class is the body more alike and akin?

Clearly to the seen—no one can doubt that.

And is the soul seen or not seen?

Not by man, Socrates.

And what we mean by 'seen' and 'not seen' is that which is or is not visible to the eye of man?

Yes, to the eye of man.

And is the soul seen or not seen?

Not seen.

Unseen then?

Yes.

Then the soul is more like to the unseen, and the body to the seen?

That follows necessarily, Socrates.

¹ Individual things change: e.g. a colour, beautiful in one context, is ugly in another. But Beauty itself never changes.

27. *The dialogue passes from dry abstract argument to a typically Platonic passage full of colour and feeling. Plato has been contrasting the changing and confused world of the senses with the invisible, unchanging world in which the soul is at home. He now draws the practical conclusion that men should live the life of the soul, which is the eternal element in them, not the life of the body, with which the soul is linked on earth and by which it is soiled and infected. Such a philosophy is essentially religious—the philosophic life is the spiritual life. It draws Plato into a mystical asceticism (esp. c. 32 f.), of whose echoes Christian mysticism is full.*

WERE we not saying long ago that the soul when using the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when using the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense (for the meaning of perceiving through the body is perceiving through the senses)—were we not saying that the soul too is then dragged by the body into the region of the changeable,¹ and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change?

Very true.

But when returning into herself she reflects, then she passes into the other world, the region of purity, and eternity, and immortality, and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives, when she is by herself and is not let or hindered; then she ceases from her erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is unchanging. And this state of the soul is called wisdom?

That is well and truly said, Socrates, he replied.

¹ See note on previous page.

And to which class is the soul more nearly alike and akin, as far as may be inferred from this argument, as well as from the preceding one?

I think, Socrates, that, in the opinion of every one who follows the argument, the soul will be infinitely more like the unchangeable—even the most stupid person will not deny that.

And the body is more like the changing?

Yes.

28. YET once more consider the matter in another light: When the soul and the body are united, then ^{so} nature orders the soul to rule and govern, and the body to obey and serve. Now which of these two functions is akin to the divine? and which to the mortal? Does not the divine appear to you to be that which naturally orders and rules, and the mortal to be that which is subject and servant?

True.

And which does the soul resemble?

The soul resembles the divine, and the body the mortal—there can be no doubt of that, Socrates.

Then reflect, Cebes: of all which has been said is not this the conclusion?—that the soul is in the very likeness of the divine, and immortal, and intellectual, and uniform, and indissoluble, and unchangeable; and that the body is in the very likeness of the human, and mortal, and unintellectual, and multiform, and dissoluble, and changeable. Can this, my dear Cebes, be denied?

It cannot.

29. BUT if it be true, then is not the body liable to

speedy dissolution? and is not the soul almost¹ or altogether indissoluble?

Certainly.

And do you further observe, that after a man is dead, the body, or visible part of him, which is lying in the visible world, and is called a corpse, and would naturally be dissolved and decomposed and dissipated, is not dissolved or decomposed at once, but may remain for some time, nay even for a long time, if the constitution be sound at the time of death, and the season of the year favourable? For the body when shrunk and embalmed, as the manner is in Egypt, may remain almost entire through infinite ages; and even in decay, there are still some portions, such as the bones and sinews, which are practically indestructible:—Do you agree?

Yes.

The fate after death of those who have lived a spiritual life.

And is it likely that the soul, which is invisible, in passing to the place of the true After-world, which like her is invisible, and pure, and noble, and on her way to the good and wise God, whither, if God will, my soul is also soon to go—that the soul, I repeat, if this be her nature and origin, will be blown away and destroyed immediately on quitting the body, as the many say? That can never be, my dear Simmias and Cebes. The truth rather is, that the soul which is pure at departing and draws after her no bodily taint, having never voluntarily during life had connexion

¹ 'almost', because the argument has only proved the soul *like to* unchanging and indissoluble realities such as the 'Ideas'.

with the body, which she is ever avoiding, herself gathered into herself;—and making such abstraction her perpetual study—which means that she has been a true disciple of philosophy; and therefore has in fact been always engaged in the practice of dying? For is not philosophy the study of death?—¹

Certainly—

That soul, I say, herself invisible, departs to the invisible world—to the divine and immortal and rational: thither arriving, she is secure of bliss and is released from the error and folly of men, their fears and wild passions and all other human ills, and for ever dwells, as they say of the initiated, in company with the gods. Is not this true, Cebes?

Yes, said Cebes, beyond a doubt.

30. The fate of those who have neglected the soul and lived the life of the body. The following chapter gives the principles observed in the transmigration of souls.

BUT the soul which has been polluted, and is impure at the time of her departure, and is the companion and servant of the body always, and is in love with and fascinated by the body and by the desires and pleasures of the body, until she is led to believe that the truth only exists in a bodily form, which a man may touch and see and taste, and use for sexual pleasures—the soul, I mean, accustomed to hate and fear and avoid the intellectual principle, which to the bodily eye is dark and invisible, and can be attained only by philosophy;—do you suppose that such a soul will depart pure and unalloyed?

Impossible, he replied.

¹ See p. 97, n. 2.

She is penetrated by the corporeal, which the continual association and constant care of the body have wrought into her nature?

Very true.

And this corporeal element, my friend, is heavy and weighty and earthy, and visible: and by it the soul is depressed and dragged down again into the visible world, because she is afraid of the invisible and of the world below—prowling about tombs and sepulchres, near which, as they tell us, are seen certain ghostly apparitions of souls which have not departed pure, but have a visible element and so are seen.¹

That is very likely, Socrates.

Yes, that is very likely, Cebes; and these must be the souls, not of the good, but of the evil, which are compelled to wander about such places in payment of the penalty of their former evil way of life; and they continue to wander until, through the craving after the corporeal which never leaves them, they are imprisoned finally in another body.

31. AND they may be supposed to find their prisons in the same natures which they have had in their former lives.

¹ A theory of ghosts, of which Milton makes use in *Comus*:

When lust . . .

Lets in defilement to the inward parts,
The soul grows clotted by contagion,
Imbodies, and imbrutes, till she quite lose
The divine property of her first being.
Such are those thick and gloomy shadows damp
Oft seen in chancel vaults and sepulchres . . .
Lingering and sitting by a new made grave,
As loath to leave the body that it loved,
And linked itself by carnal sensuality
To a degenerate and degraded state.

What natures do you mean, Socrates?

What I mean is that men who have been gluttonous, and immoral, and drunken, and have not taken pains to avoid these vices, would pass into asses and animals of that sort. What do you think?

82

I think such an opinion to be exceedingly probable.

And those who have chosen the portion of injustice, and tyranny, and violence, will pass into wolves, or into hawks and kites;—whither else can we suppose them to go?

Yes, said Cebes; with such natures, beyond question.

And so with the rest, are not their destinations clear, corresponding with their habits?

Certainly, he said, beyond a doubt.

Some are happier than others; and the happiest both in themselves and in the place to which they go are those who have practised the civil and social virtues which are called temperance and justice, and are acquired by habit and practice without philosophy and reason.¹

Why are they the happiest?

Because they may be expected to pass into some civilized and social kind which is like their own, such as bees or wasps or ants, or back again into the form

¹ For Plato there are two types of goodness: that which rests on rational intellectual conviction ('philosophy and reason'), and that which is produced merely by right habits and good environment. The latter type of 'good' men tend to pass by transmigration into bees or ants, which are 'civilized', because they live in communities and have the character which enables them to do so. One sees what Plato would have thought of the type of 'goodness' produced by 'habit and practice' in Russia, Germany, and Italy—and of its ultimate destination.

of man, and just and worthy men may be supposed to spring from them.

Very likely.

32. The role of philosophy in life. Starting from a different point from religion, it impresses on men the same lessons as religion—the misleading and transitory nature of the world of the senses, the superior reality of the unseen world.

No one who has not studied philosophy and who is not entirely pure when he leaves this world is allowed to enter the company of the gods, but the lover of knowledge only. And this is the reason, Simmias and Cebes, why the true votaries of philosophy abstain from all the desires of the body, and hold out against them and refuse to give themselves up to them—not because they fear poverty or the ruin of their families, like the lovers of money, and the world in general; nor like the lovers of power and honour, because they dread the dishonour or disgrace of wrong conduct.¹

No, Socrates, that would not become them, said Cebes.

No indeed, he replied; and therefore they who have any care of their own souls, and do not merely live moulding and fashioning the body, turn their backs on all this; they will not walk in the ways of the blind: and when philosophy offers them purification and release from evil, they feel that they ought not to

¹ Again Plato insists that the wise are good because goodness is good, not for any advantages that goodness may bring. He is no utilitarian.

resist her influence, and whither she leads they turn and follow.

What do you mean, Socrates?

33. I WILL tell you, he said. The lovers of knowledge are conscious that the soul was simply fastened and glued to the body—until philosophy took her in hand, she could only view real existence through the bars of a prison, not with her own eyes, and she was wallowing in the mire of complete ignorance, and by the agency of desire had become the principal accomplice in her own captivity. This was her state; and ⁸³ then, as I was saying, and as the lovers of knowledge are well aware, philosophy, seeing how terrible was her confinement, of which she was to herself the cause, took and gently comforted her and tried to release her, pointing out that the eye and the ear and the other senses are full of deception, and persuading her to retire from them, and abstain from all but the necessary use of them, and be gathered up and collected into herself, urging her to trust in herself and her own pure apprehension of pure existence, and to mistrust whatever comes to her through other channels and is subject to variation; for such things are visible and perceived by the senses, but what she sees in her own nature is invisible and perceived by the mind. And the soul of the true philosopher thinks that she ought not to resist this deliverance, and therefore abstains from pleasures and desires and pains and fears, as far as she is able; reflecting that when a man has great joys or sorrows or fears or desires, he suffers from them, not merely the sort of evil which might be anticipated—as, for example, the

loss of his health or property which he has sacrificed to his desires—but an evil greater far, which is the greatest and worst of all evils, and one of which he never thinks.

What is it, Socrates? said Cebes.

The evil is that when the feeling of pleasure or pain is most intense, every soul of man imagines the objects of this intense feeling to be the most distinct and real: but this is not so.¹ And these objects are chiefly visible ones. Is it not so?

Very true.

And is not this the state in which the soul is most enthralled by the body?

How so?

Why, because each pleasure and pain is a sort of nail which nails and rivets the soul to the body, until she becomes like the body, and believes that to be true which the body affirms to be true; and from agreeing with the body and having the same delights she is obliged to have the same habits and haunts, and is not likely ever to be pure at her departure to the world below, but is always infected by the body; and so she sinks into another body² and there like a seed strikes root and grows, and has therefore no part in the communion of the divine and pure and simple.

Most true, Socrates, answered Cebes.

34. AND this, Cebes, is the reason why the true lovers

¹ Plato makes the profound remark that when we feel pleasure or pain, we think the objects which excite them more real than any other, though in fact those objects normally belong to the world of the senses, which is less real than the spiritual world.

² i.e. is reincarnated in some sub-human form.

of knowledge are temperate and brave; and not for the reason which the world gives.

Certainly not.

84

Certainly not! The soul of a philosopher will reason in quite another way; she will not ask philosophy to release her in order that when released she may deliver herself up again to the thralldom of pleasures and pains, doing a work only to be undone again, weaving instead of unweaving her Penelope's web.¹ But she will calm passion, and follow reason, and dwell in the contemplation of her, beholding the true and divine (which is not matter of opinion),² and thence deriving nourishment. Thus she seeks to live while she lives, and after death she hopes to go to her own kindred and to that which is like her, and to be freed from human ills. Never fear, Simmias and Cebes, that a soul which has been thus nurtured and has had these pursuits, will at her departure from the body be scattered and blown away by the winds and be nowhere and nothing.

35. *Again the discussion is broken by an interlude.*

WHEN Socrates had done speaking, for a considerable time there was silence; he himself appeared to be meditating, as most of us were, on what had been said; only Cebes and Simmias talked in a low voice to one another. And Socrates observing them asked

¹ Penelope, having promised to marry when her marriage-dress was ready, unwove by night the web which she wove by day. The philosopher, having unwoven the web of desires in which human beings are entangled, will not weave it again.

² Knowledge is possible in the supersensual world of thought: in the changing world of the senses one can only have 'opinion'.

what they thought of the argument, and whether there was anything wanting? For, said he, there are many points still open to doubt and attack, if one were disposed to sift the matter thoroughly. Should you be considering some other matter I say no more, but if you are still in doubt do not hesitate to say exactly what you think, and let us have anything better which you can suggest; and if you think that I can be of any use, allow me to help you.

Simmias said: I must confess, Socrates, that doubts did arise in our minds, and each of us was urging and pressing the other to put the question which we wanted to have answered but which neither of us liked to ask, fearing that our importunity might be troublesome at such a time.

Socrates replied with a smile: Simmias, what are you saying? I am not very likely to persuade other men that I do not regard my present situation as a misfortune, if I cannot even persuade you that I am no worse off now than at any other time in my life. Will you not allow that I have as much of the spirit of prophecy in me as the swans? For they, when they perceive that they must die, having sung all their life long, then sing more beautifully than ever, rejoicing
85 in the thought that they are about to go away to the god whose ministers they are.¹ But men, because they are themselves afraid of death, malign the swans saying that their last song is one of sorrow, or lament for their death, not considering that no bird sings

¹ i.e. Apollo, god of prophecy, who came to Greece from the north, and to whom the swan, a bird of northern latitudes, was sacred. Natural history knows nothing of this supposed peculiarity of swans. For the legends about the other birds see 'Tereus' in a Dictionary of Mythology.

when cold, or hungry, or in pain, not even the nightingale, nor the swallow, nor yet the hoopoe; which are said indeed to tune a lay of sorrow, although I do not believe this to be true of them any more than of the swans. But because they are sacred to Apollo, they have the gift of prophecy, and foresee the good things of another world; so they sing and rejoice in that day more than ever they did before. And I too, believing myself to be the consecrated servant of the same God, and the fellow servant of the swans, and thinking that I have received from my master gifts of prophecy which are not inferior to theirs, would not go out of life less joyously than the swans. Never mind then, if this be your only objection, but speak and ask anything which you like, while the eleven magistrates¹ of Athens allow.

Very good, Socrates, said Simmias; then I will tell you my difficulty, and Cebes will tell you his. I feel myself (and I daresay that you have the same feeling), how hard or rather impossible is the attainment of any certainty about questions such as these in the present life. And yet he would be a poor creature who did not test what is said about them to the uttermost, or who abandoned the task before he had examined them from every side and could do no more. He should persevere until he has achieved one of two things: either he should discover for himself, or learn from another, the truth about them; or, if this be impossible, I would have him take the best and most irrefragable of human theories, and let this be the raft upon which he sails through life—not without risk, as I admit, if he cannot find some word of

¹ See note on p. 39.

God¹ which will more surely and safely carry him. And now, as you bid me, I will venture to question you, and then I shall not have to reproach myself hereafter with not having said at the time what I think. For when I consider the matter, either alone or with Cebes, the argument does certainly appear to me, Socrates, to be inadequate.

36. *S.'s statement of the spiritual view of the soul as an eternal reality independent of the body is followed sharply by two materialist theories, put forward by the Thebans, Simmias and Cebes. S. has argued that the soul must be eternal because it has the properties of eternal things—it is invisible, incorporeal, beautiful. But so, replies Simmias, is harmony. Yet harmonies perish before the visible, corporeal instruments which produce them. Why then should the soul not perish with or before the body, as a harmony perishes when the lyre which produced it is destroyed?*

Simmias gives a physical, material explanation of the soul—as a harmony produced by the body. As harmony results from a due proportion of different notes, so the soul results from a due proportion between the different elements of which the body is composed. In this notion, which Plato describes as 'specious and plausible but

¹ Certain knowledge, religious revelation (the 'word of God', which Simmias speaks of, is no doubt the Orphic doctrine of the soul (B.)), or the hypothesis which best explains the facts—these are the three possible guides in life. Failing some religious certainty, men, Plato thinks, should make the voyage of life on the 'raft' of the belief which he has just expounded. The hint thrown out here was developed later by the Platonic School into the doctrine that probability must be the guide of life. Pascal's *il faut parier*, and still more Bishop Butler's argument for religion from probability, are in the same line of descent.

unproved', we meet for the first time in history a form of the modern theory of epiphenomenalism, viz. that consciousness proceeds from and supervenes on the physical nature of the body, like the note proceeding from a bell.¹

The idea is characteristic of early Greek speculation, not fully scientific, but something out of which science will emerge; one sees a vivid and subtle imagination studying phenomena, searching for a rational explanation of them, quite untrammelled by tradition or convention, fertile in hypotheses, and ready to reject them when disproved.

SOCRATES answered: I dare say, my friend, that you may be right, but I should like to know in what respect the argument is insufficient.

In this respect, replied Simmias: Suppose a person to use the same argument about harmony and the lyre—might he not say that harmony² is a thing invisible, incorporeal, perfect, divine, existing in the lyre which is harmonized, but that the 86 lyre and the strings are matter and material, composite, earthy, and akin to mortality? And when some one breaks the lyre, or cuts and rends the strings, then he who takes this view would argue as you do, and on the same analogy, that the harmony survives and has not perished—you cannot imagine, he would say, that the lyre without the strings and the broken strings themselves, which are mortal, remain, and yet that the harmony, which is of heavenly and immortal nature and kindred, has perished—perished before the mortal. The harmony must still be somewhere, and the wood and strings will decay before anything can happen to that. The thought, Socrates, must have occurred to your own mind that such is our conception of the soul; and that when the body is in a

¹ For a criticism of modern theories of epiphenomenalism see Ward, *Naturalism and Agnosticism*, vol. ii.

² There is doubt, which does not, however, affect the argument, of the meaning of the word *ἁρμονία*, here translated 'harmony'. Its normal meaning is 'tune' or 'tuning'. I have kept the traditional translation.

manner strung and held together by the elements of hot and cold, wet and dry,¹ then the soul is the harmony or due proportionate admixture of them. But if so, whenever the strings of the body are unduly loosened or overstrained through disease or other injury, then the soul, though most divine, like other harmonies of music or of works of art, of course perishes at once; although the material remains of the body may last for a considerable time, until they are either decayed or burnt. And if any one maintains that the soul, being the harmony of the elements of the body, is first to perish in that which is called death, how shall we answer him?

37. SOCRATES looked fixedly² at us, as his manner was, and said with a smile: Simmias has reason on his side; and why does not some one of you who is better able than myself answer him? for there is force in his attack upon me. But perhaps, before we answer him, we had better also hear the criticism of Cebes, that we may gain time for reflection; and when they have both spoken, we may either assent to them, if they seem to harmonize, or if not, we will then maintain our position. Please to tell me then, Cebes, he said, what was the difficulty which troubled you?

A fresh objection. Cebes takes a different view of the soul from Simmias, but like him denies its immortality. Simmias regarded the soul as the product of the body, as a harmony is the product of a musical instrument. Cebes, while admitting that the soul may be 'stronger and more lasting' than the body, thinks that it, too, in the end perishes, and urges that as a man may wear out many coats but finally die, so the soul may wear out and survive many bodies, but finally itself wear out.

¹ The allusion is to the physical theory that the body is a compound of four elements—fire, air, water, earth. From their union and tension a 'harmony' arises—the soul.

² S. had prominent eyes with a penetrating glance.

Cebes said: I will tell you. My feeling is that the argument is where it was, and open to the same objections which were urged before; I am ready to admit that the existence of ⁸⁷ the soul before entering into the bodily form has been very ingeniously, and, if I may say so, quite sufficiently proved; but the existence of the soul after death is still, in my judgment, unproved. Now my objection is not the same as that of Simmias; for I am not disposed to deny that the soul is stronger and more lasting than the body, being of opinion that in all such respects the soul very far excels the body. Well then, says the argument to me, why do you remain unconvinced?—When you see that the weaker continues in existence after the man is dead, will you not admit that the more lasting must also survive during the same period of time? Now I will ask you to consider whether the objection, which, like Simmias, I will express in a figure, is of any weight. The analogy which I will adduce is that of an old weaver, who dies, and after his death somebody says:—He is not dead, he must be alive;—see, there is the coat which he himself wove and wore, and which remains whole and undecayed. And then he proceeds to ask of some one who is incredulous, whether a man lasts longer, or the coat which is in use and wear; and when he is answered that a man lasts far longer, thinks that he has thus certainly demonstrated the survival of the man, who is the more lasting, because the less lasting remains. But that, Simmias, as I would beg you to remark, is a mistake; any one can see that he who talks thus is talking nonsense. For the truth is, that your weaver, having woven and worn many such coats, outlived several of them; and was outlived by the last; but a man is not therefore proved to be slighter and weaker than a coat. Now the relation of the body to the soul may be expressed in a similar figure; and any one may very fairly say in like manner that the soul is lasting, and the body weak and shortlived in comparison. He may argue in like manner that every soul wears out many bodies, especially if a man live many years. While he is alive the body is in

flux and decays, and the soul always weaves another garment and repairs the waste. But of course, whenever the soul perishes, she must have on her last garment, and this will survive her; and then at length, when the soul is dead, the body will show its native weakness, and quickly decompose and pass away. I would therefore rather not rely on the argument from superior strength to prove the continued existence of the soul after death.

- 88 Granting even more than you affirm to be possible, and acknowledging not only that the soul existed before birth, but also that the souls of some exist, and will continue to exist after death, and will be born and die again and again, and that there is a natural strength in the soul which will hold out and be born many times—nevertheless, we may be still inclined to think that she will weary in the labours of successive births, and may at last succumb in one of her deaths and utterly perish; and this death and dissolution of the body which brings destruction to the soul may be unknown to any of us, for no one of us can have had any experience of it: and if so, then I maintain that he who is confident about death has but a foolish confidence, unless he is able to prove that the soul is altogether immortal and imperishable. But if he cannot prove the soul's immortality, he who is about to die will always have reason to fear that in this separation of body and soul, the soul may utterly perish.

38. *The long break in the argument at this point*

- (a) *shows that we are approaching its crisis;*
- (b) *brings S. into the foreground and reveals his personality.*

ALL of us, as we afterwards remarked to one another, had an unpleasant feeling at hearing what they said. When we had been so firmly convinced before, now to have our faith shaken seemed to introduce a confusion and uncertainty, not only into the previous argument, but into any future one; either we were incapable of forming a judgement, or the facts themselves did not admit it.

Ech. There I feel with you—by heaven I do, Phaedo, and when you were speaking, I was beginning to ask myself the same question: What argument can I ever trust again? For what could be more convincing than the argument of Socrates, which has now fallen into discredit? That the soul is a harmony is a doctrine which has always had a wonderful attraction for me, and, when mentioned, came back to me at once, as my own original conviction. And now I must begin again and find another argument which will assure me that when the man is dead the soul survives. Tell me, I implore you, how did Socrates proceed? Did he appear to share the unpleasant feeling which you mention? or did he calmly meet the attack? And did he answer forcibly or feebly? Narrate what passed as exactly as you can.

Phaed. Often, Echecrates, I have admired Socrates, but never more than on that occasion. That ⁸⁹ he should be able to answer was nothing, but what astonished me was, first, the gentle, friendly, and approving manner in which he received the words of the young men, and then his quick sense of the wound which had been inflicted on us by the argument, and the readiness with which he healed it. He might be compared to a general rallying his defeated and

broken army, urging them to accompany him and return to the field of argument.

Ech. What followed?

Phaed. You shall hear, for I was close to him on his right hand, seated on a stool, and he on a couch which was a good deal higher. He stroked my head, and pressed the hair upon my neck—he used often to rally me on my hair;¹ and then he said: To-morrow, Phaedo, I suppose that these fair locks of yours will be severed.

Yes, Socrates, I suppose that they will, I replied.

Not so, if you will take my advice.

What then? I said.

To-day, he replied, and not to-morrow, if this argument dies and we cannot bring it to life again, you and I will both shave our locks: and if I were you, and the argument got away from me, and I could not hold my ground against Simmias and Cebes, I would myself take an oath, like the Argives,² not to wear hair any more until I had renewed the conflict and defeated them.

Yes, I said; but Heracles himself is said not to be a match for two.

Summon me then, he said, and I will be your Iolaus³ until the sun goes down.

I summon you rather, I rejoined, not as Heracles summoning Iolaus, but as Iolaus might summon Heracles.

¹ Phaedo, a Peloponnesian, wore his hair long, unlike the Athenians. In mourning it would be cut short.

² The Argives, having lost the town of Thyrea, swore to wear their hair short till they had recaptured it.

³ Iolaus was the nephew and companion of Heracles, who is here mentioned as a typical strong man.

39. *The repeated attempts to prove the immortality of the soul have so far failed, no conclusion has been reached, and the audience are discouraged and depressed. (Their mood is described on p. 143.) In the two following chapters S. warns them against what he calls 'misologism'—the scepticism, cynicism, and 'flight from reason'—which are a recurrent disease of every epoch of thought, and, pointing to their origin in the hasty credulity and dogmatism which lead to disillusionment, shows how they may be avoided. The warning holds equally for those whom intellectual discouragement leads to scepticism and those who fly from it to an irrational faith. It would be difficult to find anything more instinct with the essential principles of the intellectual life than these two magnificent chapters.*

THAT will do as well, he said. But first let us take care that we avoid a danger.

Of what nature? I said.

The danger of becoming misologists, he replied: no worse thing can happen to a man than this. For as there are misanthropists or haters of men, there are also misologists or haters of reasoning, and both spring from the same cause, which is ignorance of the world. Misanthropy arises out of ignorance of men and excessive trustfulness;—you trust a man and think him altogether true and sound and faithful, and then in a little while he turns out to be false and bad; and then another and another, and when this has happened several times to a man, especially when it happens among those whom he deems to be his own most trusted and familiar friends, and he has often quarrelled with them, he at last hates all men, and

believes that no one has any good in him at all. You must have observed this trait of character?

I have.

And is not the feeling discreditable? Is it not obvious that such a one was trying to deal with men without any knowledge of human nature; for such knowledge would have taught him the true state of
90 the case, that few are the good and few the evil, and that the great majority are in an intermediate class.

What do you mean? I said.

I mean, he replied, as you might say of the very large and very small—that nothing is more uncommon than a very large or very small man; and this applies generally to all extremes, whether of great and small, or swift and slow, or fair and foul, or black and white: and whether the instances you select be men or dogs or anything else, few are the extremes, but those betwixt and between are numberless. Did you never observe this?

Yes, I said, I have.

And do you not imagine, he said, that if there were a competition in evil, the worst would be found to be very few?

Yes, that is very likely, I said.

Yes, that is very likely, he replied; although in this respect arguments are unlike men—there, I was led on by you to say more than I had intended; but the point of comparison was, that when a simple man who has no skill in reasoning believes an argument to be true which he afterwards imagines, whether rightly or wrongly, to be false, and then another and another, he has no longer any faith left; and great disputers, as you know, come to think at last that they have

grown to be the wisest of mankind, and that they alone have discovered that both in life and in reasoning everything is unsound and uncertain, and that all things, like the currents in the Euripus, move up and down and never for a moment are in one stay.¹

That is quite true, I said.

Yes, Phaedo, he replied, and how melancholy, if there is such a thing as truth or certainty or possibility of knowledge—that a man should have lighted upon some argument or other which at first seemed true and then turned out to be false, and instead of blaming himself and his own incompetence, because he is annoyed, should at last be too glad to transfer the blame from himself to reasoning in general: and for ever afterwards should hate and abuse it, and lose truth and the knowledge of realities.

Yes, indeed, I said; this is very melancholy.

40. LET us then, in the first place, he said, be careful of allowing or of admitting into our souls the notion that there is no health or soundness in any reasoning at all. Rather say that we have not yet attained to soundness in ourselves, and that we must play the man and do our best to gain health of mind—you and all other men having regard to the whole of your future life, and I myself in the prospect of death. For at this moment I am sensible that I have not the ⁹¹temper of a philosopher; like the uneducated, I am only a partisan. Now the partisan, when he is en-

¹ Plato is here thinking of those philosophers who, adopting the physical theory of Heraclitus that all things are in continual flux, went on to argue that knowledge is therefore impossible. In the strait of Euripus between Euboea and the mainland the tide changes seven times a day.

gaged in a dispute, cares nothing about the rights of the question, but is anxious only to convince his hearers of his own assertions. And the difference between him and me at the present moment is merely this—that whereas he seeks to convince his hearers that what he says is true, I am rather seeking to convince myself; to convince my hearers is a secondary matter with me. You see how selfish I am! For if what I say is true, then I do well to be persuaded of the truth; but if there is nothing after death, still, during the short time that remains, I shall not distress my friends with lamentations, and my ignorance will not last, but will die with me, and therefore no harm will be done. This is the state of mind, Simmias and Cebes, in which I approach the argument. And I would ask you to be thinking of the truth and not of Socrates: agree with me, if I seem to you to be speaking the truth; or if not, withstand me might and main, that I may not deceive you as well as myself in my enthusiasm, and like the bee, leave my sting in you before I die.

41. *Resuming the argument, S. attacks the theory that the soul is a harmony. Though denying that the soul survives the body, Simmias believes that it exists before it. This admission puts him at the mercy of S., who points out that a harmony cannot exist before the elements of which it is composed: therefore if the soul exists before the body, it cannot be a harmony of it. (Clearly this argument will only convince believers in the pre-existence of the soul.)*

S. then argues that:

(a) *there is no degree in harmonies—one harmony*

cannot be more or less harmonious than another:—therefore if the soul is a harmony, there can be no degree in souls: but there clearly are such degrees—one soul is good and another bad; therefore the soul cannot be a harmony.

(b) A harmony depends on the elements of which it is composed; but the soul does not depend on the body, it controls it: therefore it is not a harmony of the body.

The last argument reveals the importance of the issue at stake. Those who regard the soul as a harmony hold a materialist theory of the soul, believing that it depends on the body (as a harmony depends on a musical instrument), and therefore that it will perish with the body. Plato is arguing for the soul's independence and autonomy.

AND now let us proceed, he said. And first of all let me be sure that I have in my mind what you were saying. Simmias, if I remember rightly, has fears and misgivings whether the soul, although a fairer and diviner thing than the body, being as she is in the form of harmony, may not perish first. On the other hand, Cebes appeared to grant that the soul was more lasting than the body, but he said that no one could know whether the soul, after having worn out many bodies, might not perish herself and leave her last body behind her; and that this is death, which is the destruction not of the body but of the soul, for in the body the work of destruction is ever going on. Are not these, Simmias and Cebes, the points which we have to consider?

They both agreed to this statement of them.

He proceeded: And do you deny the force of the whole preceding argument, or of a part only?

Of a part only,¹ they replied.

And what did you think, he said, of that part of the argument in which we said that knowledge was recollection, and

¹ Simmias had accepted the pre-existence of the soul, but denied its survival after death.

92 hence inferred that the soul must have previously existed somewhere else before she was imprisoned in the body?

Cebes said that he had been wonderfully impressed by that part of the argument, and that his conviction remained absolutely unshaken. Simmias agreed, and added that he himself could hardly imagine the possibility of his ever thinking differently.

But, rejoined Socrates, you will have to think differently, my Theban friend, if you still maintain that harmony is a compound, and that the soul is a harmony which is made out of the tensions which exist in the body; for you will surely never allow yourself to say that a harmony is prior to the elements which compose it.

Never, Socrates.

But do you not see that this is what you imply when you say that the soul existed before she took the form and body of man, and was made up of elements which as yet had no existence? For harmony is not like the soul, as you suppose; but first the lyre, and the strings, and the sounds exist in a state of discord, and then harmony is made last of all, and perishes first. And how can such a notion of the soul as this agree with the other?

Not at all, replied Simmias.

And yet, he said, there surely ought to be harmony¹ in an argument of which harmony is the theme?

There ought, replied Simmias.

But there is no harmony, he said, in the two propositions that knowledge is recollection, and that the soul is a harmony. Which of them will you retain?

I think, he replied, that I have a much stronger faith, Socrates, in the first of the two, which has been fully demonstrated to me,² than in the latter, which has not been demonstrated at all, but rests only on probable and plausible grounds; and is therefore believed by the many. I know too well that these arguments from probabilities are impostors, and unless

¹ A play on words.

² See p. 113 f.

great caution is observed in the use of them, they are apt to be deceptive—in geometry,¹ and in other things too. But the doctrine of knowledge and recollection rests on a principle worthy of belief; and the principle was that the soul must have existed before she came into the body, because to her belongs the essence of which the very name implies existence.² Having, as I am convinced, rightly accepted this conclusion, and on sufficient grounds, I must, as I suppose, cease to argue or allow others to argue that the soul is a harmony.

42. LET me put the matter, Simmias, he said, in another 93 point of view: Do you imagine that a harmony or any other compounded thing can be in a state other than that of the elements out of which it is compounded?

Certainly not.

Or have any active or passive quality which is not present in its elements?

He agreed.

Then a harmony does not, properly speaking, lead the parts or elements which make up the harmony, but only follows them.

He assented.

For harmony cannot possibly have any motion, or sound, or other quality which is opposed to its parts.

That would be impossible, he replied.

And does not the nature of every harmony depend upon the manner in which the elements are harmonized?

I do not understand you, he said.

If a harmony were more, and more highly,³ harmonized (supposing this possible), then it would be more, and more

¹ Arguments from probability are obviously absurd in geometry; but they are also very dangerous in other things.

² The Greek word *οὐσία*, 'essence', is the abstract form of the more concrete *τὸ ὄν*, lit. 'the existing'.

³ The distinction indicated by 'more' and 'more highly' is perhaps between (a) pitch, (b) interval. The supposition here is, of course, as S. indicates, impossible: one harmony is not more harmonious than another.

highly, a harmony; if less, and less highly, it would be less, and less highly so.

True.

But does the soul admit of degrees? or is one soul in the very least degree more or less, or more or less completely, a soul than another?

Not in the least.

Yet surely we say, of two souls, that one has intelligence and virtue, and is good, and the other has folly and vice, and is bad: and this is correct?

Yes.

But what will those who maintain the soul to be a harmony say of this presence of virtue and vice in the soul?—will they say that here is another harmony, and another discord, and that the virtuous soul is harmonized, and herself being a harmony has another harmony¹ within her, and that the vicious soul is inharmonical and has no harmony within her?

I cannot tell, replied Simmias; but I suppose that something of the sort would be asserted by those who say that the soul is a harmony.

And we have already admitted that no soul is more a soul than another; which is equivalent to admitting that one harmony is not more or less a harmony, or more or less highly a harmony, than another.

Quite true.

And that which is not more or less a harmony is not more or less harmonized?

True.

And that which is not more or less harmonized cannot have more or less of harmony, but only an equal harmony?

Yes, an equal harmony.

Then one soul, not being more or less absolutely a soul than another, is not more or less harmonized?

Exactly.

¹ i.e. virtue, which is a harmony of the three parts of the soul, the rational, the spirited, and the appetitive parts.

And therefore has neither more nor less of discord, nor yet of harmony?

She has not.

And having neither more nor less of harmony or of discord, one soul has no more vice or virtue than another, if vice be discord and virtue harmony?

Not at all more.

Or, speaking more correctly, Simmias, the soul, if she is a 94 harmony, will never have any vice; because a harmony, being absolutely a harmony, has no part in the inharmonical.

No.

And therefore a soul which is absolutely a soul has no vice?

How can she have, if the previous argument holds?

Then, if all souls are equally by their nature souls, all souls of all living creatures will be equally good?

I agree with you, Socrates, he said.

And can all this be true, think you? he said; for these are the consequences which seem to follow from the assumption that the soul is a harmony?

It cannot be true.

43. ONCE more, he said, what ruler is there of the elements of human nature other than the soul, and especially the wise soul? Do you know of any?

Indeed, I do not.

And is the soul in agreement with the affections of the body? or is she at variance with them?¹ For example, when the body is hot and thirsty, may not the soul incline us against drinking? and when the body is hungry, against eating? And this is only one instance out of ten thousand of the opposition of the soul to the things of the body.

Very true.

But we have already acknowledged that the soul, being a harmony, can never utter a note at variance with the tensions

¹ Note here and in what follows S.'s arguments for the autonomy and supremacy of the soul and its distinctness from the body.

and relaxations and vibrations and other affections of the strings out of which she is composed; she can only follow, she cannot lead them?

It must be so, he replied.

And yet do we not now discover the soul to be doing the exact opposite—leading the elements of which she is said to be composed; almost always opposing and coercing them in all sorts of ways throughout life, sometimes more violently with the painful discipline of medicine and gymnastic; then again more gently; now threatening, now admonishing the desires, passions, fears, as if talking to a thing which is not herself, as Homer in the *Odyssey* represents Odysseus doing in the words—

He beat his breast, and thus reproached his heart:

Endure, my heart; far worse hast thou endured!

Do you think that Homer wrote this under the idea that the soul is a harmony capable of being led by the affections of the body, and not rather of a nature which should lead and master them—herself a far diviner thing than any harmony could be?

Yes, Socrates, I quite think so.

Then, my friend, we can never be right in saying that the
95 soul is a harmony, for we should contradict the divine Homer, and contradict ourselves.

True, he said.

44. *S. restates the argument of Cebes which is 'of a much more serious kind than that of Simmias'. It is 'one quite familiar in our own times. . . . If we admit interaction between mind and body, it is argued that mind must part with "energy" in acting on the body, and Cebes, like a modern physicist appealing to the principle of Carnot, holds that this loss of energy cannot be made good indefinitely. A time will come when the effective energy of the soul has been wholly dissipated. Thus his criticism,*

*like that of Cebes, is precisely of the kind which a man of science is tempted to urge against the belief in immortality in our own day.*¹

THUS much, said Socrates, of Harmonia, your Theban goddess,² who has graciously yielded to us; but what shall I say, Cebes, to her husband Cadmus, and how shall I make peace with him?

I think that you will discover a way of propitiating him, said Cebes; I am sure that you have put the argument with Harmonia in a manner that I could never have expected. For when Simmias was mentioning his difficulty, I quite imagined that no answer could be given to him, and therefore I was surprised at finding that his argument could not sustain the first onset of yours; and not impossibly the other, whom you call Cadmus, may share a similar fate.

Nay, my good friend, said Socrates, let us not boast, for fear that some evil eye should put to flight the word which I am about to speak. That, however, may be left in the hands of those above; while I come to close quarters in Homeric fashion, and see if there is anything in your view. Its gist is as follows: You want to have it proved to you that the soul is imperishable and immortal, and the philosopher who is confident in death appears to you to have but a vain and foolish confidence, if he believes that he will fare better in the next world than one who has led another sort of life, unless he can prove this: and you

¹ A. E. Taylor, *Plato*, pp. 195, 198.

² S. has disposed of the theory that the soul is a harmony; he has still to meet the difficulty which he now states. Simmias and Cebes were Thebans; hence the play on Harmonia and her husband Cadmus, local deities who were worshipped at Thebes.

say that the demonstration of the strength and divinity of the soul, and of her existence prior to our becoming men, does not necessarily imply her immortality. Admitting the soul to be long-lived, and to have known and done much in a former state, still she is not on that account immortal; and her entrance into the human form may be a sort of disease which is the beginning of dissolution, and may at last, after the toils of life are over, end in that which is called death. And whether the soul enters into the body once only or many times, does not, as you say, make any difference to our individual fears. For any man, who is not devoid of sense, must fear, if he has no knowledge and can give no account of the soul's immortality. This, or something like this, I suspect to be your notion, Cebes; and I designedly recur to it in order that nothing may escape us, and that you may, if you wish, add or subtract anything.

But, said Cebes, as far as I see at present, I have nothing to add or subtract: I mean what you say that I mean.

45. *Before the argument of Cebes is discussed, there is an interlude, but one very relevant to the discussion. After restating that part of Cebes' contention which is still unanswered, S. breaks off into a description of his own intellectual development, which is intensely interesting, as autobiography, as a glimpse of early Greek science, as a study of the spiritual adventures of a scientist, and as a criticism of the adequacy of physical science to give a view of life or to solve its problems. It is for the latter reason that S. introduces it here. Simmias and Cebes have been*

raising objections made by contemporary science to a belief in immortality, and S., before answering Cebes in detail, indicates the limitations of science in dealing with such a question, illustrating it from his own experience. He describes how he was fascinated by the aims and promise of natural science, and by theories about the origin of life, the nature of thought, the properties of numbers, and how later fascination gave way to bewilderment. Some critics have thought that S. was never a scientist, and that Plato is attributing his own intellectual history to his master. If this were so, the account would be equally interesting both for the views it puts forward and as the autobiography of a great philosopher; but there is every reason to believe that the story which Plato tells is the story of S.¹—of his early scientific interests, and of the reasons why he found them unsatisfying and passed to other studies.

Here we see the thoughts and difficulties of a fifth-century Greek. We shall appreciate their significance if we remember that a few generations earlier men regarded the sun and moon as deities and had a purely primitive and superstitious outlook on the universe. The gap between the seventh century B.C. and the age of S. is greater than the gap between the world of S. and our own. During those years Greek thinkers had conceived the idea of a rational explanation of the universe—the greatest achievement in the intellectual history of mankind. Here we see some of its results, and may note again the subtlety and acuteness of the Greek mind, its amazing detachment, its instinct to look below the surface of things, its perception of what the problems are. For though the solutions may be crude, the problems are real—and remain.

¹ Cf. Burnet, *Phaedo*, xxxviii f.

SOCRATES paused awhile, and seemed to be absorbed in reflection. At length he said: You are raising a tremendous question, Cebes, involving the whole
 96 nature of generation and decay,¹ about which, if you like, I will give you my own experience; and if anything which I say is likely to avail towards the solution of your difficulty you may make use of it.

I should very much like, said Cebes, to hear what you have to say.

Then I will tell you, said Socrates. When I was young, Cebes, I had a prodigious desire to know that department of philosophy which is called natural science;² to know the causes of things, and why a thing is and is created or destroyed appeared to me to be a lofty profession; and I was always agitating myself with the consideration of questions such as these—Is the growth of animals the result of the hot and cold principle, undergoing putrefaction, as some have said?³ Is the blood the element with which we think,⁴ or the air, or the fire? or perhaps

¹ The most fundamental of all problems. How, out of the original elements—atoms, air, fire, or whatever it may be—does the world, as it is, come into existence ('generation'), and, having once come into existence, why does it change ('decay')?

² Note how much more precise than ours is the Greek vocabulary for the world of thought. 'Philosophy', the 'love of wisdom', covers the whole intellectual life. That field of it which we vaguely call 'science' the Greeks accurately describe as 'inquiry into Nature'. Their word for 'inquiry', *ιστορία*, has in English been narrowed into History (a special form of 'inquiry'); 'the term "Natural History" partly preserves the ancient sense of the word'. (B.)

³ On this theory life results from the differentiation of heat and cold (two original principles): the heat acts on the moist earth, from whose decomposition life results.

⁴ What do we think with? One theory said Air (breath obviously

nothing of the kind—but the brain may be the originating power of the perceptions of hearing and sight and smell, and memory and opinion may come from them, and science may be based on memory and opinion when they come to rest.¹ And then I went on to examine their decay, and then to the phenomena of heaven and earth, and at last I concluded myself to be utterly and absolutely incapable of these inquiries, as I will satisfactorily prove to you. For I was fascinated by them to such a degree that my eyes grew blind to things which I had seemed to myself, and also to others, to know quite well; I forgot what I had before thought self-evident truths; e.g. such a fact as that the growth of man is the result of eating and drinking; for when by the digestion of food flesh is added to flesh and bone to bone, and the other parts of man assimilate their proper elements, the lesser bulk becomes larger and the small man great. Was not that a reasonable notion?

Yes, said Cebes, I think so.

Well; but let me tell you something more. There was a time when I thought that I understood the meaning of greater and less pretty well; and when I saw a great man standing by a little one, I fancied

being associated with life); another said Fire (the sun and the presence of warmth in living beings suggested this); a third, Blood (present throughout the body); a fourth, the Brain, which receives our sense-perceptions, organizes them into ideas, records them, and so develops scientific knowledge. All these theories are purely physical; as we see later, S. (or Plato) was the first to break away from materialist explanations of life and the soul.

¹ 'Opinions' change: they 'come to rest' in scientific knowledge, when the *causes* of phenomena are known. As Plato says in the *Meno*, 'opinions walk away, like runaway slaves, till they are fastened down by the tie of the cause'.

that one was taller than the other by a head; or one horse would appear to be greater than another horse: and still more clearly did I seem to perceive that ten is two more than eight, and that two cubits are more than one, because two is the double of one.

And now what is your notion of such matters? said Cebes.

I should be far enough from imagining, he replied, that I knew the cause of any of them, by heaven I should; for I cannot satisfy myself that, when one is added to one, the one to which the addition is made
97 becomes two, or that the two units added together make two by reason of the addition.¹ I cannot understand how, when separated from the other, each of them was one and not two, and now, when they are brought together, the mere juxtaposition or meeting of them should be the cause of their becoming two: neither can I understand how the division of one is the way to make two; for then a different cause would produce the same effect—as in the former instance the addition and juxtaposition of one to one was the cause of two, in this the separation and subtraction of one from the other would be the cause. Nor am I any longer satisfied that I understand, by this method, the reason why a unit or anything else is either generated or destroyed or exists at all, but I have in my mind some confused notion of a new method, and can never admit the other.

¹ We now pass from scientific to metaphysical problems. How can the addition of 1 to 1 convert either of these units into something quite different, viz. 2? (If two loaves are put together, each remains what it was. Why is this not so with numbers?) Does one of them become 2, or do both together become 2? How is it that we can get 2 in totally different ways, (a) by dividing 1 in half, (b) by adding 1 to 1?

46. Discontented with purely materialist theories of the universe, S. turned to Anaxagoras (d. 428 B.C.), who held that in the beginning all things were in chaos, then 'mind came and ordered them'.¹ But Anaxagoras' theory turned out to be as physical as any other. 'Mind' first set the world in motion, but then, like the God of eighteenth-century Deism, left it to function by itself. This seemed to S. no better than the views of the earlier physicists. His own theory sounds crudely teleological, but behind it is the justifiable conviction, which he expresses admirably, that physical science by itself explains neither the order and excellence of the world nor human conduct, that its laws are the conditions but not the cause of the working of the universe, and that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in its philosophy. Its definitions are inadequate, because they fail to take purpose into account. Yet if the world is ordered by mind, everything must have some purpose, and if so, things can be best understood by studying their purpose. Here science fails to help us. It might correctly define a horse as a solid-hoofed perissodactyl quadruped with a mane and tail, whose voice is a neigh; or as a compound of chemical and physical properties. But Plato felt that such definitions give a very inadequate idea of a horse, and that we should have a juster idea of one if we considered its purpose, its function, its areté or 'virtue', what it was 'good for'.² He does not, of course, reject or attack science; but, however effective in its own field, it seems to him to throw no light on ultimate realities. This and the following chapter have some acute remarks on its limitations.

¹ Fr. 11.

² See p. 7, and Nettleship, *Lectures on the Republic*, p. 221 f.

THEN I heard some one reading, as he said, from a book of Anaxagoras, that mind was the disposer and cause of all, and I was delighted at this notion, which appeared quite admirable, and I said to myself: If mind is the disposer, mind will dispose all for the best, and put each particular in the best place; and I argued that if any one desired to find out the cause of the generation or destruction or existence of anything, he must find out what state of being or acting or being acted on was best for that thing, and therefore a man had only to consider the best for himself and others, and then he would also know the worse, since the same science comprehended both. And I rejoiced to think that I had found in Anaxagoras a teacher of the causes of existence such as I desired, and I imagined that he would tell me first whether the earth is flat or round; and whichever was true, he would proceed to explain the cause and the necessity of this being so, and then he would teach me the nature of the best and show that this was best; and if he said that the earth was in the centre, he would further explain that this position was the best, and I should be satisfied with the explanation given, and
98 not want any other sort of cause. And I thought that I would then go on and ask him about the sun and moon and stars, and that he would explain to me the comparative speed of their motions, and their turnings and various states, active and passive, and how all of them were for the best. For I could not imagine that when he spoke of mind as the disposer of them, he would give any other account of their being as they are, except that this was best; and I thought that in assigning the cause to each thing individually

and to all collectively, he would go on to explain to me what was best for each and what was good for all. These hopes I would not have sold for a large sum of money, and I seized the books and read them as fast as I could in my eagerness to know the better and the worse.

47. WHAT expectations I had formed, and how grievously was I disappointed! As I proceeded in my reading, I found my philosopher making no use of mind or any other principle of order, but having recourse to air, and aether, and water, and many other eccentricities. I might compare him to a person who began by maintaining generally that mind is the cause of the actions of Socrates, but who, when he endeavoured to explain the causes of my several actions in detail, went on to show that I sit here because my body is made up of bones and muscles; and the bones, as he would say, are hard and have joints which divide them, and the muscles are elastic, and cover the bones, along with the flesh and skin which hold them together; and as the bones move in their sockets by the contraction or relaxation of the muscles, I am able to bend my limbs, and this is why I am sitting here in a curved posture—that is what he would say; and he would have a similar explanation of my talking to you, which he would attribute to sound, and air, and hearing, and he would assign ten thousand other causes of the same sort, forgetting to mention the true cause, which is, that the Athenians have thought fit to condemn me, and, accordingly, I have thought it better and more right to remain here and undergo whatever sentence they impose; for I

am inclined to think that these muscles and bones
 99 of mine would have gone off long ago to Megara or Boeotia¹—by the dog they would, if they had been moved only by their own idea of what was best, and if I had not thought it better and nobler, instead of playing truant and running away, to endure any punishment which the state inflicts. There is surely a strange confusion of causes and conditions in all this. It would indeed be true to say that without bones and muscles and the other parts of the body I cannot execute my purposes. But to say that I do as I do because of them, and that this is the way in which mind acts, and not from the choice of the best, is a very careless and idle mode of speaking. Fancy not being able to distinguish the cause from the condition, which the many, groping in the dark, are always mistaking and misnaming. And thus one thinker surrounds the earth with a vortex and makes the heaven sustain the earth;² another makes the air, like a flat trough, support it. The idea of a power, which in arranging them as they are arranges them for the best, never enters into their minds; and instead of finding any superior strength in it, they rather expect to discover another Atlas of the world who is stronger and more everlasting and more able to hold all things together than the Good³—of the

¹ i.e. he would have escaped from prison, as Crito had urged. 'By the dog', a favourite exclamation of S.

² Two contemporary theories of the cause why the earth does not fall: either because the sky round it spins so fast as to prevent it falling (like water flung up in a cup that revolves); or because it rests on the air, like an object resting on a trough.

³ To Plato the world depends on a Final Cause, which he calls 'the Good'. Here he acutely criticizes the materialist, who discards spiritual explanations of the universe, but invests matter with what are really

binding and controlling power of the Good they think nothing; and yet this is the principle which I would fain learn if any one would teach me. But as I have failed either to discover this myself, or to learn it from any one else, I will expound to you, if you like, how for the purposes of my inquiry I elaborated a second string to my bow.

I should very much like to hear, he replied.

48. *A difficult passage.*¹ *S. feels that physical explanations do not fully explain things. They deal, through the senses, with phenomena, 'things in operation', and do not penetrate to their reality. Indeed, the study of physical science may actually injure 'the eye of the soul' with which alone truth itself can be seen. So S. will act like a man observing the sun not directly but through its reflection in water; instead of looking at things directly, as the scientist does, S. will define them, and, studying them thus indirectly through their definitions, so apprehend their real nature. The definitions must express the Eternal and Absolute 'Idea' which is the real nature of each thing, and through which alone it can really be understood. For example, a pencil is no doubt a combination of the chemical constituents of the wood and graphite out of which it is made; but to have a true idea of it we must go beyond these to its nature, to the idea which we express by the word 'pencil'. A beautiful thing may be a combination of certain colours or forms; but to appreciate it we must go beyond colour and form to the 'Idea' of Beauty, an absolute, eternal reality, in*

supernatural powers. Atlas in Greek mythology is a giant who sustained the sky.

¹ For a discussion of it, see Hardie, *A Study in Plato* p. 66 f.

which it 'participates' and in virtue of which we call it beautiful. Plato's view, then, is that behind all phenomena, constituting and explaining them, are 'ideas', 'universals', 'general principles'; further, that the lesser 'ideas' lead up to and are subsumed in higher 'ideas', and these in turn ultimately conduct to one supreme 'idea' ('the best of the higher', p. 169). The world is thus an organism with many parts, related to and dependent on each other, and working as a single whole. To understand it one must first comprehend the 'ideas', and then trace their interdependence, till one sees the whole as an ordered hierarchy, leading up to an absolute eternal 'Idea' or Principle, called elsewhere 'the Idea of the Good', which explains and gives meaning to the whole. That is Plato's conception of the Universe.

SOCRATES proceeded: I thought that as I had failed in my study of phenomena, I ought to be careful that I did not lose the eye of my soul; as people may injure their bodily eye by observing and gazing on the sun during an eclipse, unless they take the precaution of only looking at the image reflected in the water, or in some similar medium. So, in my own case, I was afraid that my soul might be blinded altogether if I looked at things with my eyes or tried to apprehend them by the help of the senses. And I thought that I had better have recourse to the world of definitions and seek there the truth of existence.

100 I dare say that the simile is not perfect—for I am very far from admitting that he who contemplates existences through the medium of definitions sees them only 'through a glass darkly', any more than he who considers them in action and operation. However, this was the method which I adopted: I first assumed some definition which I judged to be the strongest, and then I assumed as true whatever seemed to agree with this, in respect of its cause or of anything else about it; and that which disagreed I regarded as untrue. But I

should like to explain my meaning more clearly, as I do not think that you as yet understand me.

No, indeed, replied Cebes, not very well.

49. THERE is nothing new, he said, in what I am about to tell you; but only what I have been always and everywhere repeating in the previous discussion and on other occasions: I want to show you the sort of causation which has occupied my thoughts. I shall have to go back to those familiar words which are in the mouth of every one, and first of all assume that there is an absolute Beauty and Goodness and Greatness, and the like; grant me this, and I hope to be able to show you the nature of the cause, and to prove the immortality of the soul.

Cebes said: You may proceed at once with the proof, for I grant you this.

Well, he said, then I should like to know whether you agree with me in the next step; for I cannot help thinking, if there be anything beautiful other than absolute Beauty, should there be such, that it can be beautiful only in so far as it partakes of absolute Beauty¹—and I should say the same of everything. Do you agree in this notion of the cause?

Yes, he said, I agree.

He proceeded: I know nothing and can understand nothing of any other of those wise causes which are alleged; and if a person says to me that the bloom of colour, or form, or any such thing is a source of beauty, I ignore his view, which is only confusing to me, and simply and singly, and perhaps foolishly, hold and am assured in my own mind that nothing makes a thing beautiful but the presence and participation of Beauty in whatever way or manner obtained; for as to the manner I am uncertain, but I stoutly contend that by Beauty all beautiful things become beautiful. This appears to me to be the safest answer which I can give, either to myself or to another, and to this I cling, in the persuasion that this principle will never be overthrown, and that to myself or to any one who asks

¹ See p. 79.

the question, I may safely reply, That by Beauty beautiful things become beautiful. Do you not agree with me?

I do.

And that only by Greatness great things become great and greater greater, and by Smallness the less become less?

True.

Then, if a person were to remark that A is taller by a head
 101 than B, and B less by a head than A, you would refuse to admit his statement, and would stoutly contend that what you mean is only that the greater is greater by, and by reason of, Greatness, and the less is less only by, and by reason of, Smallness; and thus you would avoid the danger of saying that the greater is greater and the less less by the measure of the head, which is the same in both, and would also avoid the monstrous absurdity of supposing that the greater man is greater by reason of the head, which is small.¹ You would be afraid to draw such an inference, would you not?

Indeed, I should, said Cebes, laughing.

In like manner, you would be afraid to say that ten exceeded eight by, and by reason of, two; but would say by, and by reason of, Number; or you would say that two cubits exceed one cubit not by a half, but by Greatness?—for there is the same liability to error in all these cases.

Very true, he said.

Again, would you not be cautious of affirming that the addition of one to one, or the division of one, is the cause of two? And you would loudly asseverate that you know of no way in which anything comes into existence except by participation in its own proper essence, and consequently, as far as you know, the only cause of two is the participation in Duality—this is the way to make two, and the participation in one is the way to make one. You would say: I will let

¹ The puzzle is (a) that if A is *taller* by a head than B, then B is *smaller* by a head than A; but if so the same thing (a head) is the cause of smallness and tallness at the same time; (b) that a head, which is small, is yet the cause of tallness.

alone puzzles of division and addition—wiser heads than mine may answer them; inexperienced as I am, and ready to start, as the proverb says, at my own shadow, I cannot afford to give up the sure ground of my principle.¹ And if any one assails you there, you would not mind him, or answer him, until you had seen whether the consequences which follow agree with one another or not, and when you are further required to give an explanation of this principle, you would do it in the same way, basing it in turn on further principle—on that which seemed the best of the higher principles—till you reached a satisfactory conclusion: but you would not confuse the principle and the consequences² in your reasoning, like mere controversialists—at least if you wanted to discover anything of reality. Not that this confusion signifies to them, who never care or think about it at all, for they are clever enough to be pleased with themselves however great the confusion into which they throw everything. But you, if you are a philosopher, will certainly do as I say. 10a

What you say is most true, said Simmias and Cebes, both speaking at once.

Ech. Yes, Phaedo; and I do not wonder at their assenting. Any one who has the least sense will acknowledge the wonderful clearness of Socrates' reasoning.

Phaed. Certainly, Echecrates; and such was the feeling of the whole company at the time.

¹ A description of Plato's scientific method. He starts with a hypothesis—with a 'principle' that he assumes (e.g. that it is in virtue of Beauty that beautiful things are beautiful). To this 'principle' he holds so long as the consequences which follow from it are consistent with each other and with the phenomena which the 'principle' seeks to explain.

² You cannot deny a principle and *at the same time* discuss its consequences, e.g. you cannot at the same time discuss the divine government of the world and deny its possibility.

Plato has already spoken of 'misology' (p. 145). He here condemns with some bitterness another vice of the intellectual life—the habit of arguing not in order to reach truth but for the mere sake of arguing. In speaking of the 'controversialists' he has no doubt some contemporaries in mind.

Ech. Yes, and equally of ourselves, who were not of the company, and are now listening to your recital. But what followed?

50. *Briefly, the third argument for immortality is:*

(a) *Opposites (e.g. heat and cold, odd and even) cannot coexist.*

(b) *Further, certain things which are not opposites, but which contain opposite elements, not merely as accidental attributes but as part of their essence, cannot coexist. E.g. the number 3 (or any odd number), though not actually an opposite of the even, cannot coexist with it; so too fire, though not an opposite of cold, cannot coexist with it.*

(c) *Life belongs to the essence of the soul, to which the body owes its life; therefore death cannot coexist with life, any more than cold can coexist with fire. Life can only be life, and a dead soul is an idea as self-contradictory as a cold fire.*

(d) *Therefore the soul is immortal, and because the immortal is imperishable, the soul cannot perish, but when death comes to the body, will simply withdraw.*

Stripped of its dialectical form, the kernel of Plato's argument is that the nature of the soul is such that death is unthinkable in connexion with it.

Phaed. After all this had been admitted, and they had agreed that 'ideas' exist, and that all other things participate in them and derive their names from them, Socrates, if I remember rightly, said:

This is your way of speaking; and yet when you say that Simmias is greater than Socrates and less than Phaedo, do you not predicate of Simmias both greatness and smallness?

Yes, I do.

But still you allow that Simmias does not really exceed Socrates, as the words may seem to imply, because he is

Simmias, but by reason of the size which he has; just as Simmias does not exceed Socrates because he is Simmias, any more than because Socrates is Socrates, but because Socrates has smallness when compared with the greatness of Simmias?

True.

And if Phaedo exceeds him in size, this is not because Phaedo is Phaedo, but because Phaedo has greatness relatively to Simmias, who is comparatively smaller?

That is true.

And therefore Simmias is said to be great, and is also said to be small, because he is in a mean between them, exceeding the smallness of the one by his greatness, and allowing the greatness of the other to exceed his smallness. He added, laughing, I am speaking with the precision of a legal document, but I believe that what I am saying is true.

Simmias assented.

I speak as I do because I want you to agree with me in thinking, not only that absolute greatness will never be great and also small, but that greatness in us or in the concrete will never admit the small or admit of being exceeded: instead of this, one of two things will happen—either the greater will fly or retire before the opposite, which is the less, or at the approach of the less has already ceased to exist; but it will not allow or admit of smallness and so become different from itself; and while I, having received and admitted smallness when compared with Simmias, remain just as I was, and am the same small person, the idea of greatness cannot condescend ever to be or become small, and in like manner the smallness in us cannot be or become great; nor can any other opposite which remains itself ever be or become its own opposite, but it 103 either passes away or perishes if this happens to it.¹

¹ Simmias can be both small and great—smaller than Phaedo but greater than S.—and yet all the while remain Simmias, because his relative size is not an essential part of him. But greatness can only be greatness, because greatness belongs to the essence of it. Incidentally, we learn something of the height of S. and two of his friends.

51. THAT, replied Cebes, is quite my notion.

Hereupon, one of the company, though I do not exactly remember which of them, said: Surely this is the direct contrary of what was agreed before—that out of the greater came the less and out of the less the greater, and that opposites were in fact generated from opposites; but now this principle seems to be utterly denied.

Socrates inclined his head to the speaker and listened. I like your courage, he said, in reminding us of this. But you do not observe that there is a difference in the two cases.¹ For then we were speaking of opposites in the concrete, and now of the essential opposite which, as is affirmed, neither in us nor in nature can ever be at variance with itself; then, my friend, we were speaking of things in which opposites are present and which are called after them,² but now about the opposites which are present in them and which give their name to them; and these essential opposites will never, as we maintain, admit of generation into or out of one another. At the same time, turning to Cebes, he said: Are you at all troubled, Cebes, at our friend's objection?

No, I do not feel so, said Cebes; and yet I cannot deny that many points do trouble me.

Then we are agreed after all, said Socrates, that the opposite will never in any case be opposed to itself?

To that we are quite agreed, he replied.

¹ The objection is this. S. had argued (p. 109 f.) that by the alternation of opposites death may be expected to pass into life; but does not this contradict his assertion here that opposites cannot pass into each other? To this he replies that death passing into life is not a case of one *opposite* alternating with and passing into another, but of the alternation of *opposites in a person* in whom they are present.

The difference is between opposites (e.g. heat and cold) and things in which opposites are present (e.g. a person who may be hot as compared with snow and cold as compared with a volcano).

² If we call a man, e.g., hot, it does not mean that he is the same thing as heat. Plato describes this form of predication by saying that we call him hot 'after' heat, which 'gives its name' to him.

52. YET once more let me ask you to consider the question from another point of view, and see whether you agree with me—There is a thing which you term heat, and another thing which you term cold?

Certainly.

But are they the same as fire and snow?

Most assuredly not.

Heat is a thing different from fire, and cold is not the same as snow?

Yes.

And yet you will surely admit, that when snow, as was before said, is under the influence of heat, they will not remain snow *and* heat; but at the advance of the heat, the snow will either retire or perish?

Very true, he replied.

And the fire, too, at the advance of the cold will either retire or perish; and when the fire is under the influence of the cold, they will not remain as before, fire *and* cold.

That is true, he said.

Then it is the case that not only the 'idea' has eternally the right to its own name, but that there are other things, which are not the 'idea', but which always possess its character, so long as they exist? I will try to make this clearer by an example—The odd number is always called by the name of odd?

Very true.

But is this the only thing which is called odd? Are there not other things which have their own name, and yet are 104 called odd, because, although not the same as oddness, they are never without oddness?—an instance of this is the number three (and there are many other examples); would you not say, for example, that three may be called by its proper name, and also be called odd, which is not the same with three? And this may be said not only of three but also of five, and of every alternate number—each of them without being oddness is odd; and in the same way two and four, and the other series

of alternate numbers, are all always even, without being evenness. Do you agree?

Of course.

Then now mark the point at which I am aiming¹—not only do essential opposites exclude one another, but also concrete things, which, although not in themselves opposed, contain opposites; these, I say, likewise reject the 'idea' which is opposed to that which is contained in them, and when it approaches them they either perish or withdraw. For example—will not the number three endure annihilation or anything sooner than be converted into an even number, while remaining three?

Very true, said Cebes.

And yet, he said, the number two is certainly not opposed to the number three?

It is not.

Then not only do opposite 'ideas' repel the advance of one another, but also there are other things which repel the approach of opposites.

Very true, he said.

53. SUPPOSE, he said, that we endeavour, if possible, to determine what these are.

By all means.

Are they not, Cebes, such as compel the things of which they have possession, not only to take their own form,² but also the form of some opposite?

What do you mean?

I mean, as I was just now saying, and as I am sure that you

¹ S. has argued that opposites exclude each other. He has now gone further and argued that certain *things*, which 'contain an opposite' (as 3 'contains' odd, the opposite of even), exclude their opposite. The object of this extension of his argument is to enable him to show that the soul (which is not itself opposite to death, but 'contains' life—the opposite of death) must consequently exclude death.

² i.e. the form of the 'ideas'. The following illustration makes the meaning clear.

know, that those things which are possessed by the number three must not only be three in number, but must also be odd.

Quite true.

And on this oddness, of which the number three has the impress, the opposite 'idea' will never intrude?

No.

And this impress was given by the odd principle?

Yes.

And to the odd is opposed the even?

True.

Then the 'idea' of the even number will never arrive at three?

No.

Then three has no part in the even?

None.

Then the triad or number three is uneven?

Very true.

To return then to my distinction of natures which without being opposite to something yet do not admit it—as, in the instance given, three, although not opposite to the even, does not any the more admit of the even, but always brings the opposite into play on the other side;¹ or as two does not receive the odd, or fire the cold—from these examples (and there are 105 many more of them) perhaps you may be able to arrive at the general conclusion, that not only opposites will not receive opposites, but also that nothing which brings the opposite will admit the opposite of that which it brings, in that to which it is brought.² And here let me recapitulate—for there is no

¹ i.e. 3, though not opposite to even, has (being odd) something opposite to even which it 'brings into play' to prevent itself becoming even.

² Not only will odd refuse to 'receive' even, but 3, which 'brings the opposite' into whatever it is brought, will itself never admit even—the opposite of oddness which it brings. (A. H.)

Note (a) how the properties of number fascinate these early thinkers; (b) the intricacy and subtlety of the argument, which the Greek language can express with a lucidity of which English is incapable.

harm in repetition. The number five will not admit the nature of the even, any more than ten, which is the double of five, will admit the nature of the odd. The double has another opposite, and is not strictly opposed to the odd, but nevertheless rejects the odd altogether. Nor, again, will parts in the ratio 3: 2, nor any fraction in which there is a half, nor again in which there is a third, admit the notion of the whole, although they are not opposed to the whole: You will agree?

Yes, he said, I entirely agree and go along with you in that.

54. AND now, he said, let us begin again; and do not you answer my question in the terms in which I ask it; let me have not the old safe answer of which I spoke at first, but another equally safe, of which the truth will be inferred by you from what has been just said. I mean that if any one asks you 'what that is, of which the presence makes the body hot', you will reply not heat (this is what I call the safe and stupid answer), but fire, a far superior answer, which we are now in a condition to give.¹ Or if any one asks 'why a body is diseased', I shall not say from disease, but from fever; and instead of saying that oddness is the cause of an odd number, I shall say that the unit is the cause of it;² and so of things in general, as I dare say that you will understand sufficiently without my adducing any further examples.

Yes, he said, I quite understand you.

Tell me, then, what is that of which the presence will render the body alive?

The soul, he replied.³

¹ One can say that fire makes the body hot, because heat is an essential attribute of fire.

² As he has said that fire is the cause of some one being warm, so he will say that—not the abstract idea, odd—but the concrete unit is the cause of the number 1 being odd.

³ To appreciate the force of this argument, remember that the word here translated 'soul' meant to a Greek the principle of life (that which 'renders the body alive'). Plato assumes that this principle is identical with 'soul' in our sense.

And is this always the case?

Yes, he said, of course.

Then whatever the soul possesses, to that she comes bearing life?

Yes, certainly.

And is there any opposite to life?

There is, he said.

And what is that?

Death.

Then the soul, as has been acknowledged, will never receive the opposite of what she brings.

55. IMPOSSIBLE, replied Cebes.

And now, he said, what did we just now call that principle which repels the even?

The odd.

And that principle which repels the musical or the just?

The unmusical, he said, and the unjust.

And what do we call that principle which does not admit of death?

The immortal, he said.

And does the soul admit of death?

No.

Then the soul is immortal?

Yes, he said.

And may we say that this has been proven?

Yes, abundantly proven, Socrates, he replied.

Supposing that the odd were imperishable, must not three 106 be imperishable?

Of course.

And if that which is cold were imperishable, when the warm principle came attacking the snow, must not the snow have retired whole and unmelted—for it could never have perished, nor could it have remained and admitted the heat?

True, he said.

Again, if the non-cold or warm principle were imperishable,

the fire when assailed by cold would not have perished or have been extinguished, but would have gone away unaffected?

Certainly, he said.

And the same may be said of the immortal: if the immortal is also imperishable, the soul when attacked by death cannot perish; for the preceding argument shows that the soul will not admit of death, or ever be dead, any more than three or the odd number will admit of the even, or fire, or the heat in the fire, of the cold. Yet a person may say: 'But although the odd will not become even at the approach of the even, why may not the odd perish and the even take the place of the odd?' Now to him who makes this objection, we cannot answer that the odd principle is imperishable; for this has not been acknowledged, but if this had been acknowledged, there would have been no difficulty in contending that at the approach of the even the odd principle and the number three took their departure; and the same argument would have held good of fire and heat and any other thing.

Very true.

And the same may be said of the immortal: if the immortal is also imperishable, then the soul will be imperishable as well as immortal; but if not, some other proof of her imperishableness will have to be given.

No other proof is needed, he said; for if the immortal, being eternal, is liable to perish, then nothing is imperishable.

56. Simmias accepts this proof as convincing, if the 'Ideal Theory' on which it rests—the theory of a real, imperishable world outside the world of sense—is sound; but this principle needs to be re-examined. So the argument ends—with a question-mark.

YES, replied Socrates, and yet all men will agree that God, and the 'idea' of life, and anything else immortal, will never perish.

Yes, all men, he said—that is true; and what is more, gods, if I am not mistaken, as well as men.

Seeing then that the immortal is indestructible, must not the soul, if she is immortal, be also imperishable?

Most certainly.

Then when death attacks a man, the mortal portion of him may be supposed to die, but the immortal retires at the approach of death and is preserved safe and sound?

True.

Then, Cebes, beyond question, the soul is immortal and imperishable, and our souls will truly 107 exist in another world!

I am convinced, Socrates, said Cebes, and have nothing more to object; but if my friend Simmias, or any one else, has any further objection to make, he had better speak out, and not keep silence, since I do not know to what other season he can defer the discussion, if there is anything which he wants to say or to have said.

But I have nothing more to say, replied Simmias; nor can I see any reason for doubt after what has been said. But I still feel and cannot help feeling uncertain in my own mind, when I think of the greatness of the subject and the feebleness of man.

Yes, Simmias, replied Socrates, that is well said; and I may add that our first principles,¹ even if they appear certain, should be carefully considered; and when they are satisfactorily ascertained, then, as far as human reason can,² you may, I think, follow the

¹ i.e. the theory of 'Ideas'—the hypothesis on which the argument has been based.

² Plato, Greek though he is, does not expect more of Reason than it can do. One must follow it as far as it leads and be content with that.

argument; and if that be plain and clear, you will seek no further.

Very true.

57. *Three questions now arise: (a) If the soul is immortal, how should this affect our conduct on earth? (b) Where does the soul go and what happens to it after death? (c) What will be the future existence of those who have led good lives and of those who have not? After a few words on the first of the points, Plato deals with the other two. They are not questions which admit of scientific treatment. The intellect may hope to answer the question whether the soul is immortal, but the nature of a future life is not in its province. This is a matter of faith, not of reason. Plato deals with such questions by a 'myth' or story, for which he does not claim exact truth, but which 'is the sort of thing which is true'. He has three eschatological myths of this kind—here, in the Gorgias, and in the Republic; in each case they end the dialogue, as the Book of Revelation ends the Bible, and the intellectual argument exit in mysterium, suggesting that beyond the reason's focus of clear light lies a penumbra of mystery. In all these myths we have the Orphic doctrine of the future life with a judgement, a heaven, purgatory, hell, and reincarnation (p. 82).*

In the Phaedo Plato, like Dante centuries later, has blended with doctrines of a future life a geography of the underworld partly based on contemporary scientific theories. There are, as it were, four stories to the earth (three, strictly, for Plato does not regard the Antipodes as 'below us'). We inhabit misty depressions on its surface; on high plateaux above us is 'the real earth' (equivalent to our 'heaven'); below is a subterranean region where

the dead are judged and suffer penal or purgatorial pains; in the Antipodes there is another world, presumably like our own but of which Plato gives no details.

BUT then, my friends, he said, if the soul is really immortal, what care should be taken of her, for the sake not only of the portion of time which is called life, but of eternity! And the danger of neglecting her from this point of view does indeed appear to be awful. If death had been the end of all, the wicked would have had a good bargain in dying, for they would have been happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their souls. But now, inasmuch as the soul is manifestly immortal, there is no release or salvation from evil except the attainment of the highest goodness and wisdom. For the soul goes to the world below taking nothing with her but her training and education; and these are said greatly to benefit or greatly to injure the departed, at the very beginning of his journey thither.

For, after death, as they say, the genius¹ of each individual, to whom he belonged in life, leads him to a certain place in which the dead are gathered together, and from which after submitting to judgment they pass into the world below, following the guide, who is appointed to conduct them from this world to the other; and when they have there received their due and remained their time, another guide brings them back again after many revolutions of ages.² Now this way to the other world is not, as Aeschylus says in the *Telephus*, a single and straight 108

¹ A man's destiny is conceived as a spirit that accompanies him. Hence Heraclitus' saying, 'A man's character is his destiny.'

² See p. 82.

path—if that were so no guide would be needed, for no one could miss it; but there are many partings of the road, and windings, as I infer from the rites and sacrifices which are offered to the gods below in places where three ways meet on earth.¹ The wise and orderly soul follows in the straight path and is conscious of her surroundings;² but the soul which desires the body, and which, as I was relating before, has long been fluttering about the lifeless frame and the world of sight, is after many struggles and many sufferings hardly and with violence carried away by her attendant genius; and when she arrives at the place where the other souls are gathered, if she be impure and have done impure deeds, whether foul murders or other crimes which are akin to these, and the works of kindred criminal souls—from that soul every one flees and turns away;³ no one will be her companion, no one her guide, but alone she wanders in extremity of evil until certain times are fulfilled, and when they are fulfilled, she is borne irresistibly to her own fitting habitation; as every pure and just soul which has passed through life in the company and under the guidance of the gods has also her own proper home.

Now, the earth has divers wonderful regions, and is indeed in nature and extent very unlike the notions of geographers, as I believe on the authority of one who shall be nameless.

¹ Cross-roads in popular belief are places of magic and ghost life. Meals were left there for Hecate, a goddess of the underworld.

² The philosopher's soul is at home in the spirit world because his earthly life has been spiritual.

³ The lesson of the Parable of the Prodigal Son is one which the pagan world had yet to learn.

58. *A description of our earth.*

WHAT do you mean, Socrates? said Simmias. I have myself heard many descriptions of the earth, but I do not know, and I should very much like to know, the one in which you put faith.

And I, Simmias, replied Socrates, if I had the art of Glaucus¹ would tell you; although I know not that the art of Glaucus could prove the truth of my tale, which I myself should never be able to prove, and even if I could, I fear, Simmias, that my life would come to an end before the argument was completed. I may describe to you, however, the form and regions of the earth, according to my conception of them.

That, said Simmias, will be enough.

Well then, he said, my conviction is that the earth is a round body in the centre of the heavens, and therefore has no need of air or of any similar force to ¹⁰⁹ be a support, but is kept there and hindered from falling or inclining any way by the equiformity of the surrounding heaven and by her own equipoise.² For that which, being in equipoise, is in the centre of that which is equiform, will not incline any way in any degree, but will always remain in the same state and not deviate. And this is my first notion.

Which is surely a correct one, said Simmias.

Also I believe that the earth is very vast, and that we who live in the region extending from the river

¹ A proverbial expression (of which there are several explanations) for a very clever man.

² We get a glimpse of contemporary explanations of the stability of the earth.

Phasis to the Pillars of Heracles¹ inhabit a small portion only about the Mediterranean, like ants or frogs about a marsh, and that there are other inhabitants of many other similar places; for everywhere on the face of the earth there are hollows of various forms and sizes, into which the water and the mist and the lower air collect. But the real earth is pure and situated in the pure heaven²—there are the stars also; and it is the heaven which is commonly spoken of by us as the aether, and of which our own earth is the sediment gathering in the hollows beneath. But we who live in these hollows are deceived into the notion that we are dwelling above on the surface of the earth; which is just as if a creature who was at the bottom of the sea were to fancy that he was on the surface of the water, and that the sea was the heaven through which he saw the sun and the other stars, he having never come to the surface by reason of his feebleness and sluggishness, and having never lifted up his head and seen, nor ever heard from one who had seen, how much purer and more beautiful the world above is than his own. And such is exactly our case; for we are dwelling in a hollow of the earth, and fancy that we are on the surface; and the air we call the heaven, in which we imagine that the stars move. But the fact is, that owing to our feebleness and sluggishness we are prevented from reaching the surface of the air; for if a man could arrive at the surface, or take the wings of a bird and

¹ Roughly the Mediterranean basin, from the Caucasus to the Straits of Gibraltar.

² The Greeks distinguished the aether, the rarefied upper atmosphere in which Plato places his heaven, from the lower air which we breathe.

come to the top, then like a fish who puts his head out of the water and sees this world, he would see a world beyond; and, if the nature of man could sustain the sight, he would acknowledge that this other world was the place of the true heaven and the true light and the true earth. For our earth, and the stones, and the entire region which surrounds us, are spoilt and corroded; just as in the sea all things are corroded by the brine; nothing worth speaking of, nothing that you can call perfect, grows there—it is all caves, and sand, and an endless slough of mud not to be compared to the beauties of our world. And still less is this our world to be compared with the other. If I may tell you a story, it is worth your hearing about the character of that upper earth which is under the heaven.

And we, Socrates, replied Simmias, shall be charmed to listen to you.

59. *A vision of the 'upper earth', or heaven. Its traits are (a) material beauty, (b) intercourse with God—as in the Heavenly Jerusalem of the Book of Revelation ('Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them', xxi. 3).*

THE story, my friend, he said, is as follows: In the first place, that earth, when looked at from above, is in appearance streaked like one of those balls which have leather coverings in twelve pieces,¹ and is

¹ Twelve is a number of special significance (cf. the twelve gates of the Heavenly Jerusalem). B. points out that the Pythagoreans attached great importance to the dodekahedron (a solid with twelve sides), which of all solids most closely resembles the sphere.

divided between various colours, of which the colours used by painters on earth are in a manner samples. But there the whole earth is made up of them, and they are brighter far and clearer than ours; one is a purple of wonderful lustre, another golden, and the white one is whiter than any chalk or snow. Of these and other colours the upper earth is made up, and they are more in number and more beautiful than the human eye has ever seen; the very hollows (of which I was speaking) filled with air and water have a colour of their own, and are seen like light gleaming amid the variety of the other colours, so that the whole presents a single and continuous appearance of harmonious colour. In this beautiful land everything that grows—trees, and flowers, and fruits—are in a like degree fairer than any here; and the mountains in the same way—they have precious stones in them proportionately smoother, and more transparent, and more lovely in colour than our highlyvalued emeralds and sardonyxes and jaspers, and other gems, which are but minute fragments of them; for there all the stones are like our precious stones, and more beautiful still. The reason is that they are pure, and not, like our precious stones, spoilt or decayed by the corroding briny elements which have collected here, and which breed deformity and disease both in earth and stones, as well as in animals and plants. They are the
jewels of the upper earth, which also shines with gold and silver and the like, and they are set in the light of day and are large and abundant and in all places, making that earth a sight to gladden the beholder's eye. And there are animals and men, some in an inland region, others dwelling about the air as we

dwell about the sea; others in islands which the air flows round, near the continent; in fact, the air is used by them as the water and the sea are by us, and the aether¹ is to them what the air is to us. Moreover, the temperature of their seasons is such that they have no disease, and live much longer than we do, and have sight and hearing and intelligence, and all the other faculties, in far greater perfection, in the same degree that air is purer than water or the aether than air. Also they have temples and sacred places in which the gods really dwell, and they hear their voices and receive their answers, and are conscious of them and so hold converse with them face to face; and they see the sun, moon, and stars as they truly are,² and their other blessedness is of a piece with this.

60. *A vision of the underworld, in which Plato has inwoven theories of the origin of tides, winds, and lava streams. Tartarus is a huge funnel running right through the earth to the Antipodes. In the sides of this funnel are openings from which lead many subterranean passages. Water swirls up and down the funnel, pouring through these passages and so finding its way to the seas, lakes, and rivers of our world, where it produces tides and (through the rush of air which it takes with it) winds; then it ebbs back underground through the same passages into Tartarus. This process is repeated endlessly. The water in Tartarus does not come to a rest, because the funnel has 'no bottom', nor does it pour out into the Antipodes, because when it reaches the centre of the earth it*

¹ The upper air.

² 'This is an astronomer's vision of blessedness.' (B.)

would have to move uphill to reach them. (Plato had divined the effects, if not the fact, of gravitation.) It is not clear what sets the water in Tartarus in motion—perhaps Plato conceived it on the analogy of the intake and expiration of the breath.

All this phantasy of subterranean passages is natural for a dweller in a limestone country like Greece with its 'swallows' and caves.

SUCH is the nature of the whole earth, and of the things which are around the earth; and there are many regions in the hollows on the face of the globe everywhere, some of them deeper and broader than that which we inhabit, others deeper but with a narrower opening than ours, and some are shallower and also wider. All have numerous caves and passages broad and narrow in the interior of the earth, connecting them with one another; and there flows out of and into them, as into basins, a vast tide of water, and huge subterranean streams of perennial rivers, and springs hot and cold, and a great fire, and great rivers of fire, and streams of liquid mud, thin or thick (like the rivers of mud in Sicily, and the lava streams which follow them), and the regions about which they happen to flow are filled up with them. And there is an oscillation or kind of seesaw in the interior of the earth which moves all this up and down, and is due to the following cause: There is a chasm which is the vastest of them all, and pierces
 112 right through the whole earth; this is that chasm which Homer describes in the words—

Far off, where is the inmost depth beneath the earth;
 and which he in other places, and many other poets,

have called Tartarus. The see-saw is caused by the streams flowing into and out of this chasm, and they each have the character of the soil through which they flow. The reason why the streams are always flowing in and out, is that the watery element has no bed or bottom, but is swinging and surging up and down, and the surrounding wind and air do the same; they follow the water up and down, when it moves to the far side of the world and when it moves to our own side—just as in the act of respiration the air is always in process of inhalation and exhalation;—and the wind swinging with the water in and out produces fearful and irresistible blasts; when the waters retire with a rush into the so-called lower parts of the earth they flow through the earth into the farther regions, and fill them as though by irrigation; then when they leave those regions and rush back hither, they again fill the hollows here, and when these are filled, flow through subterranean channels and find their way to their several places, forming seas, and lakes, and rivers, and springs. Thence they again enter the earth, some of them making a long circuit into many lands, others going to a few places and not so distant; and again fall into Tartarus, some at a point a good deal lower than that at which they left it, and others not much lower, but all in some degree lower than the point from which they came. And some burst forth again on the opposite side, and some on the same side, and some wind round the earth with one or many folds like the coils of a serpent, and descend as far as they can, but always return and fall into the chasm. The rivers flowing in either direction can descend only to the centre of Tartarus and no

farther, for beyond it on either side they would have to flow uphill.

61. *Plato gives an account of four of the underground rivers, three of which belong to the landscape of the lower world. Their names betray the terror which, before Orphism, the thought of the future life awoke in the Greeks —Acheron, Styx, Cocytus, Pyriphlegethon, the rivers of Sorrow, Loathing, Lamenting, and Burning Fire.*

Now these rivers are many, and mighty, and different, and there are four principal ones, of which the greatest and outermost is that called Oceanus, which flows round the earth in a circle. Opposite it and in the opposite direction flows Acheron, which passes
113 through desert places and under the earth into the Acherusian lake: this is the lake to the shores of which the souls of most men go when they are dead, and after waiting an appointed time, which is to some a longer and to some a shorter time, they are sent back to be born again as animals.¹ The third river passes out between the two, and near the place of outlet pours into a vast region of fire, and forms a lake larger than our Mediterranean Sea, boiling with water and mud; and proceeding muddy and turbid, and winding about under the earth, comes, among other places, to the extremities of the Acherusian lake, but mingles not with the waters of the lake, and after making many coils about the earth plunges into Tartarus at a deeper level. This is that Pyriphlegethon, as the stream is called, which throws up lava streams in different parts of the earth. The fourth

¹ See p. 131.

river goes out on the opposite side, and flows first of all into a wild and savage region, which is all of a dark blue colour, like lapis lazuli; this is that river which is called the Stygian river, and falls into and forms the Lake Styx, and after falling into the lake and receiving strange powers in the waters, passes under the earth, winding round in the opposite direction to Pyriphlegethon, and approaches the Acherusian lake from the opposite side, but does not mingle with its waters. It circles many times round the earth and finally falls into Tartarus at a lower point. The name of this river, as the poets say, is Cocytus.

62. SUCH is the nature of the other world; and when the dead arrive at the place to which the genius of each severally guides them, first of all, they have sentence passed upon them, as they have lived good and holy lives or not. Those who appear to have lived neither well nor ill go to the river Acheron, and embarking in any vessels which they may find, are carried in them to the lake; there they dwell and are purified of their evil deeds, and having suffered punishment for the wrongs which they have done to others, they are absolved, and receive the rewards of their good deeds, each of them according to his deserts. But those whose crimes are so great that they seem to be incurable—who have committed many and terrible deeds of sacrilege, murders foul and violent, or the like—such are thrown into Tartarus by the fate which is their due, and they never come out. Those, again, who have committed crimes, which, although great, are not irremediable—who in a moment of anger, for example, have done some

114 violence to a father or a mother, and have repented for the remainder of their lives, or who have taken the life of another under the like extenuating circumstances—these are plunged into Tartarus, the pains of which they are compelled to undergo for a year, but at the end of the year the wave casts them forth—mere homicides by way of Cocytus, parricides and matricides by Pyriphlegethon—and they are borne to the Acherusian lake, and there they lift up their voices and call upon the victims whom they have slain or wronged, to have pity on them, and to be kind to them, and let them come out into the lake. If they prevail, then they come forth and cease from their troubles; but if not, they are carried back again into Tartarus and from thence into the rivers unceasingly, until they obtain mercy from those whom they have wronged; for that is the sentence passed upon them by their judges. Those, too, who have been pre-eminent for holiness of life are released from this earthly prison, and go to their pure home which is above, and dwell in the purer earth; and of these, such as have duly purified themselves with philosophy, live henceforth altogether without the body, in mansions fairer still, which may not be described, and of which now I have no time to tell.

So, Simmias, seeing all these things, what ought not we to do that we may obtain virtue and wisdom in this life? Fair is the prize, and the hope great!

63. *From the vision of another world, we return to earth and the practical conclusion which proceeds from a belief in the immortality of the soul. There follows a picture of an execution in Athens and of a philosopher's parting*

from the world and his friends—one of the two greatest death scenes in history. Here the art of narration reaches its highest; yet all Plato does is to describe the scene in the simplest language and the most direct way without any attempt to move the feelings. There is no forcing of the note, not a touch of sentimentality, no over-emphasis, though Plato is describing the tragedy which changed his whole life.

A MAN of sense ought not to insist that everything is as I have described it; but that this or something like it is the truth about our souls and their habitations, if the soul is shown to be immortal—that I believe is a venture fitting and worth while for a man holding this belief to make. The venture is a glorious one, and he ought to charm himself with spells like these; that is the reason why I have made my tale so long. So, I say, let a man be confident about his soul, if he has cast away the pleasures and ornaments of the body as alien things which do him harm rather than good, and has sought after the pleasures of knowledge; and has arrayed the soul, not in some alien attire, but in her own proper jewels, temperance, and justice, and courage, and nobility, and truth—in these adorned she is ready to go on her journey to the ¹¹⁵ world below, when her hour comes. You, Simmias and Cebes, and all other men, will depart at some time or other. Me already, as a tragic poet would say, the voice of fate calls. It must be almost time for me to drink the poison; and I think that I had better repair to the bath first, in order that the women may not have the trouble of washing my body after I am dead.

64. WHEN he had done speaking, Crito said: And

have you any commands for us, Socrates—anything to say about your children, or any other matter in which we can serve you?

Nothing particular, Crito, he replied; only, as I have always told you, take care of yourselves; that is a service which you may be always rendering to me and mine and to all of us, whether you promise to do so or not. But if you have no thought for yourselves, and care not to follow closely what we have said to-day and in times past, then, however much you may profess or promise at the moment, it will be of no avail.

We will do our best, said Crito. And in what way shall we bury you?

In any way that you like; but you must get hold of me, and take care that I do not run away from you. Then he looked at us, and added with a smile: I cannot make Crito believe that I am the same Socrates who have been talking and conducting the argument; he fancies that I am the other Socrates whom he will soon see, a dead body—and he asks, How shall he bury me? And though I have spoken many words in the endeavour to show that when I have drunk the poison I shall leave you and go to some happy world of the blessed—these words of mine, with which I was comforting you and myself, have had, as I perceive, no effect upon Crito. So I want you to be surety for me to him now, as at the trial he was surety to the jury for me; but let the promise be of another sort; for he was surety for me to the jury that I would remain,¹ and you must be my surety to him that I shall not remain, but go away and depart; and then

¹ A slip of memory. The surety given by Crito at the trial was for the thirty minas which S. proposed to pay (p. 41).

he will suffer less at my death, and not be distressed when he sees my body being burned or buried. I would not have him sorrow at my hard lot, or say at the burial, Thus we lay out Socrates, or, Thus we follow him to the grave or bury him; for false words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil. Be of good cheer then, my dear Crito, and say that you are burying my body only, and do with that whatever is usual, and what you think best. 116

65. WHEN he had spoken these words, he arose and went into a room to bathe; Crito followed him and told us to wait. So we remained behind, talking and thinking of the subject of our discourse, and also of the greatness of our sorrow; he was like a father of whom we were being bereaved, and we were about to pass the rest of our lives as orphans. When he had taken the bath his children were brought to him—he had two young sons and an elder one; and the women of his family also came, and he talked to them and gave them a few directions in the presence of Crito; then he sent them away and returned to us.

Now the hour of sunset was near, for a good deal of time had passed while he was within. When he came out, he sat down with us again after his bath, but not much was said. Soon the jailer, who was the servant of the Eleven, entered and stood by him, saying: To you, Socrates, whom I know to be the noblest and gentlest and best of all who ever came to this place, I will not impute the angry feelings of other men, who rage and swear at me, when, in obedience to the authorities, I bid them drink the poison—indeed, I am sure that you are not angry

with me; for others, as you are aware, and not I, are to blame. And so good-bye, and try to bear lightly what must needs be—you know my errand. Then, bursting into tears, he turned away and went out.

Socrates looked at him and said: I return your good wishes, and will do as you bid. Then turning to us, he said, How courteous he is; since I have been in prison he has always been coming to see me, and at times he would talk to me, and was as good to me as could be, and now see how generously he sorrows on my account. We must do as he says, Crito; so let the cup be brought, if the poison is prepared; if not, let the attendant prepare some.

Yet, said Crito, the sun is still upon the hill-tops, and I know that many a one has taken the draught late, and after the announcement has been made to him, dines and drinks well and sometimes enjoys some love he desires;¹ do not hurry—there is time enough.

Socrates said: Yes, Crito, and they of whom you speak are right in so acting, for they think that they will be gainers by the delay; but I am right in not following their example, for I do not think that I
117 should gain anything by drinking the poison a little later; I should only be ridiculous in my own eyes for sparing and saving a life which is already forfeit. Please then to do as I say, and not to refuse me.

66. CRITO made a sign to the servant, who was standing by; and he went out, and after a certain time returned with the man who was to administer the poison, carrying it in a cup. When Socrates saw

¹ An unpleasant picture of the ordinary Greek criminal, and of the earthly naturalism which is the reverse side of Greek life.

him, he said: My good friend, you are expert in these matters, what must I do? The man answered: You have only to walk about until your legs are heavy, and then to lie down, and the poison will act of itself. At the same time, he handed the cup to Socrates, who very cheerfully and without the least tremor or change of colour or feature, glancing upwards and looking the man full in the face, Echecrates, as his manner was, took the cup and said: What do you say about making a libation¹ out of this cup to any god? May I, or not? The man answered: We only prepare, Socrates, just so much as we deem enough. I understand, he said; but I may and must ask the gods to prosper my journey from this to the other world—even so—and so be it according to my prayer. Then raising the cup to his lips, quite readily and cheerfully he drank off the poison. Hitherto most of us had been fairly able to control our sorrow; but now when we saw him drinking, and saw, too, that he had finished the draught, we could no longer forbear, and in spite of myself my own tears were flowing fast; so that I covered my face and wept, not for him, but at the thought of my own calamity in having to part from such a friend. Nor was I the first; for Crito, when he found himself unable to restrain his tears, had got up, and I followed; and at that moment Apollodorus, who had been weeping all the time, uttered a loud and passionate cry which made all who were present break down except Socrates. What are you doing, you strange people? he said. I sent away the women

¹ The common ritual before drinking.

mainly in order that they might not misbehave in this way, for I have been told that a man should die in silence.¹ Be quiet then, and have patience. When we heard his words we were ashamed, and refrained our tears; and he walked about until, as he said, his legs began to fail, and then he lay on his back, according to the directions, and the man who gave him the poison now and then looked at his feet and legs; and after a while he pressed his foot hard, and asked him if he could feel; and he said, No; and then his leg,
 118 and so upwards and upwards, and showed us that he was cold and stiff. Then he felt them again, and said: When the poison reaches his heart, that will be the end. He was beginning to grow cold about the groin, when he uncovered his face, for he had covered himself up, and said—they were his last words: Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepius; will you remember to pay the debt?² The debt shall be paid, said Crito; is there anything else? There was no answer to this question; but in a minute or two he moved, and the attendants uncovered him; his eyes were set, and Crito closed his eyes and mouth.

Such was the end, Echecrates, of our friend; of whom I may truly say, that of all the men of his time whom I have known, he was the wisest and justest and best.³

¹ Cp. 'The Pythagoreans thought that there should be silence when a man was dying, for death was a good and sacred act' (Olympiodorus, a Neo-Platonic philosopher). Before a sacrifice, prayer, or other religious act, those present were silent, so that no unlucky or ill-omened word should be spoken.

² Asclepius is the god of health; and this vow is paid on the final recovery from the 'fitful fever' of life. (A. H.)

³ After the Greek manner, as in their drama, so here, the tragedy ends quietly, the tension relaxed.

INDEX

(See also Table of Contents.)

- Addison, Joseph, xxviii.
 Aesop, 89 f.
 Alcibiades, xxvi, xlii.
 Anaxagoras, 21, 112 f., 161 f.
 Anytus, xxii, 15.
Arete, see 'Virtue'.
 Arginusae, 30 f.
 Aristophanes, xvi, 5, 6, 108.
 Aristotle, xxx.
 Arnold, Matthew, lv.
 Artisans, 13.
 Bourget, P., xxxv.
 Brooke, Rupert, 101.
 Burnet, Prof. J., viii, xxxvii, 157.
 Butler, Bishop, 138.
 Carnot, 154.
 Cebes, 53; and *Phaedo*, *passim*.
 Charles II, xlv.
 Critias, xiv, xxvi, xxxvi.
 Crito, 41, 49 f., 87, 193 f.
 Dante, 180.
 Delphic oracle, 10.
 Dialectical process, 119.
 Dickinson, Lowes, viii, xv, li.
Dikaiosyné, liii.
 Evenus, 7 f., 90.
 Franklin, Benjamin, xxviii.
 Frazer, Sir James, 81.
 Future life described, 180 f.
 Germany, xxix, 67, 131.
 Hardie, W. F. R., 165.
 Heard, Gerald, xiv.
 Heraclitus, 109, 147, 181.
 Huxley, Julian, xiv.
 Ideas, theory of, 78 f., 99 f.,
 165 f., 178.
 Inge, Dr. W. R., 76.
 Irony, xxvii, 37.
 Kalos, liii.
 Law, Greek view of, 17.
 Laws, speech of the, 62 f.
 Lecky, W. H., xli.
 Lycon, xxii, 15.
 Meletus, xxii, 14 f.
 Meno, xxxii f., 114, 159.
 Mill, J. S., xi.
 Milton, xxx, 130.
 Misology, 145.
 Montaigne, 97.
 More, Sir Thomas, lvi.
 Myths, Platonic, 180.
 Orphism, 82 f., 92, 103, 107 f.,
 138, 180.
 Pascal, 138.
 Petre, Miss, 76.
 Philosophy:
 as 'music', 91.
 life of, 96 f., 105, 129, 132 f.,
 and *Phaedo*, *passim*.
 meaning of in Greek, lii, 158.
 study of, 132 f.
 word first used, 84.
 Plato, xlvii f., 33, 41 f., 88.
 Poets, 12 f.
 Politicians, 11.
 Pre-existence of soul, 114 f.
 Protagoras, xiv.
 Prytaneum, 38.

- Reminiscence, doctrine of, 113 f.
 Revelation, Book of, 41, 180, 185.
 Robin, Professor, viii, 2.
 Ross, Sir W. D., xlix.
 Russell, Bertrand, 81, 114.
- Science, Greek, 156 f., 183.
 Shaw, Bernard, xli, 14.
 Shelley, 76.
 Simmias, 53; and *Phaedo*, *passim*.
 Socrates:
 children, 35, 48, 54, 68 f., 89, 195.
 corruption of youth, alleged against, xxvii, 16 f., 32 f.
 death, 196 f.
 divine 'sign', xxv, 29, 45, 47.
 irreligion, alleged against, xxiv f., 16 f., 20 f.
 poetry of, 90.
 politics, attitude to, 29 f.
 positive element in, xxxvi, xlv f.
 poverty, xv, 28, 40.
 state, attitude to, 49, 62 f., 70 f.
 trial, xxi f.
 views on death, 23 f., 43 f., 92 f., 96 f., 181; immortality, 41 f., 69, 74 f. (*Phaedo*, *passim*); public opinion, 55 f.; religion, xxiv f., 16, 20 f., 24 f., 36, 42, 73 f., 105 f.; science, 6, 156 f.; suicide, 92 f.; wisdom, 14, 102, 126.
 wife, xvi, 89, 195.
 Socratic circle, 85 f.
 Sophists, xiv, 7 f.
Sophrosyné, liv f.
 Soul (*psyché*), meaning of, liv, 176.
 Soul, nature of, 123 f., 138 f., 148 f.; and *Phaedo*, *passim*.
 Stewart, J. A., 76.
 Swans, 136.
- Taylor, Prof. A. E., viii, xlix, 1, 13, 155.
 Thirty Tyrants, xiii, xxvi, 31.
 Transmigration of souls, 130 f.
- Vaughan, Henry, 113.
 'Virtue' (*areté*), 7, 40, 104.
- War, causes of, 101.
 Ward, Prof. J., 139.
 Wells, H. G., xiv.
 Wordsworth, 113, 119.
 Xenophon, xxii, xxxii, xlvii f.